

Tales and Traditions
of
The Netherlands

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Tales and Traditions
of the
Netherlands.



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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Tales in the following Volume have been collected with considerable care,—many of them from sources little known,—and will, it is hoped, prove attractive, not only to the readers of mere stories, but also to those who wish to gain an insight into the events, manners and customs, &c., of past times by means of historical episodes. The Volume may likewise serve as an agreeable companion to the tourist in Belgium, furnishing, as it does, many interesting memorials and traditions of those old towns so famed in history—Antwerp, Ghent, Tournai, Namur, Ypres, Bruges, Liege, &c. &c. Many of the tales are historically authentic—others are of that class termed “legendary,” for the truth of which no one vouches, but which, nevertheless, every one reads with interest and avidity.

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TALES AND TRADITIONS

OF

THE NETHERLANDS.

I.

The Archduke's Necklace.

ONE rainy evening in the month of December, 1618, when the weather was so thick that you could scarcely see ten paces before you, and night was rapidly extinguishing the last traces of a melancholy day, two men, of suspicious appearance, were seated in the wood of Cambre, under a gigantic oak, one of the still remaining trees of those vast forests which once surrounded Brussels. The large branches of the tree, now bare of leaves, afforded a sorry protection from the rain; but the men were wrapped in thick hooded cloaks, and, to guard against cold and damp, as well as to keep up their spirits, they regaled themselves from time to time with a few mouthfuls of *eau-de-vie* from a leathern bottle which lay at their side.

One of these men had his nose disfigured by an old scar, and his chin so prominent that his under-teeth served to support his upper lip. His red beard mixed with grey, and the fierceness of his countenance gave

him the appearance of a bull-dog. This was Knops, of the grey eye, one of these old *gueux*, or bandit-beggars of the woods, who had never submitted to the laws, and who still continued to lead a wandering and predatory life in spite of all the efforts of the magistrates and their officers. He had long infested Brabant; and, though a description was given of his appearance which could easily be recognized, he had hitherto eluded the researches of justice, living in the wildest parts of the forests, and seldom approaching the more inhabited districts. His extraordinary strength, audacity, and cunning, had procured for him some trusty confederates, whose business it was to bring him intelligence of travellers whom he might attack, to furnish him with provisions, and to sell in the neighbouring towns the produce of his robberies. His present companion was one of this class; a little, jovial-looking, humpbacked man named Fritz, whose whole appearance, for he was lame as well as deformed, was calculated to place him above suspicion in the eyes of the public. His usual abode was in Brussels, where he occupied a cabin in a retired corner of the Allée des Chats, in the street of the Six Jetons.

"Truly," said he, to Knops, as he seized with his large hand the leathern flask of spirits, "truly I have great pleasure in working with you, old friend; you do things in right good style."

"My boy," replied the other, "it is only cowards and good-for-nothing people who kill men. To rob them, indeed, is only just, when they have and I have not: every one must live. Thus my method has always brought me good luck; I have never yet been taken."

"Is it true that you have never killed any one?" said Fritz.

"Oh, there are always some accidents in life," replied the bandit. "I have, unfortunately, destroyed two men; but that is a small thing in two or three hundred encounters. Moreover, I was obliged to do it. I happened to fall upon some unreasonable men, who were foolish enough to resist, and I was obliged to defend myself. But make yourself easy at present, my friend; if the

man whom we expect is alone, as you say, I shall certainly not maltreat him."

"He is alone," replied his companion; "he quitted Louvain this morning, and ought to be here by this time. No doubt it is because the roads are so bad."

"But he is on horseback."

"So much the worse; for you say he is fat and heavy."

"And very strong too, they say. He is the confidential messenger of the Archduke. Will you strip him entirely?"

"That is a very foolish remark, my poor Fritz; it is in this way that people of our profession are caught. What should I do with his clothes, pray? To manage a theft cleverly, one ought to leave the fewest possible traces of it. I shall only take his purse and the necklace."

"They say that it is a most precious jewel, a necklace of magnificent pearls, which the Archduke Albert is about to give to the Infanta Isabella as a New-year's present."

"He will have to give her something else then. But what think you is the value of the pearls? and how will you sell them?—for I leave this part of the business to you; as for me, I prefer gold; that cannot be so easily identified."

"I shall make a fine sum of this necklace, you may depend upon it; an ornament for the Infanta ought to be worth a good deal, and I have a plan for disposing of it to-morrow morning. Formerly we used to sell such things to the 'receivers;' but they are dangerous people, and are sure to cheat us. Then I have sometimes pledged on my own account at the money-lenders; they, too, are a set of scoundrels, for they are not content unless they receive one half: if they lend a poor man ten florins, at the end of a month you must return them twenty, or even thirty; if they take a pledge worth a hundred florins, they will scarcely advance you five-and-twenty, and it is a chance if you ever see the remainder. But the Archduke, who, I must say, is a truly worthy prince, has just opened at Brussels, in the Rue des Foulons,

a house for lending money, where they honestly give you a third of the value, and take but little interest ; and when you do not redeem the pledge at the end of three or six months, or whatever may be the time fixed upon, they dispose of it by public sale, and return you your due."

"Well then, take the necklace there ; but pledge it only for three months, so that we may make the best of it. This idea of the Archduke's is certainly a good one ;—I like it much, and would never rob that man if I was as rich as he is."

"They call this bank a *Mont de piété* ; a singular name, is it not ? There has been for some time one at Ghent, and now they are about to establish another at Liège."

The night had by this time become so dark that Knops, with his cat-like eyes, could not see a step before him. At last a sound reached their ears like the trotting and plashing of a tired horse through the pools of water. The bandit, whose prudence never forsook him, covered his face with a crape mask, which he fastened over his hood, advanced as stealthily as a wolf, and placing himself in the road, seized the bridle of the horse as soon as he came up.

"Good evening, sir," said he to the traveller.

"Good evening," answered the latter in a trembling voice.

"That is Jean Brinck, one of the Archduke's retainers," whispered the hunchback, in a disguised voice from the foot of the tree.

"You are the messenger of the Archduke Albert," said Knops ; "fear nothing, but just take your right hand from the saddle-bow, for if you attempt to draw a pistol, or poignard, one hair's breadth, I will break your fist in a moment, which I should be sorry to be obliged to do. You have a pearl necklace in your possession, which I am particularly in want of, and you have also a purse with which I should like to make acquaintance ; I only ask you for these two things ; nothing more."

These words were uttered in so determined a tone, that the terrified messenger made no further resistance, but cast about for some other way of escape.

"Remember," said he, "that this necklace belongs to the Archduke, and if you rob me of it, he will be sure to institute the strictest search, and will not rest until he has recovered it."

"They may search for me as much as they like," said Knops, "but they will not find me."

"You will make nothing of this necklace, friend," continued the messenger; "be satisfied with my purse,—it contains sixty good florins, and I will give it you with all my heart."

"It is well done of you, there is more in it than I expected; but, for all that, I cannot give up the necklace."

"Remember," said the cavalier,—bethinking himself of a stratagem,—"I have an escort of two armed men, who are following close behind me."

"They are very negligent in their duty then," replied Knops, "for I do not even hear them. But come, no subterfuge; you see I do things without violence. Three men, however, would not frighten me, and you would be convinced of this if you knew who I am. Give me the necklace."

The poor messenger drew out his purse, still keeping back the pearl necklace; but he was obliged at last, however unwillingly, to give it up.

"Now," said he, "I am a lost man. If I say I have been robbed, no one will believe me; I shall be subjected to the most odious suspicions. We live in times when depredations are so frequent, that dishonest servants can easily rob their masters, and protest that they themselves have been robbed."

"I know you will be accused," said Knops, coolly; "but I will take care you are cleared of all blame. For our safety as well as your own, you must not return to Brussels to-day. Now that this affair is concluded, you shall come with us, and to-morrow morning when I send you on your way home, I will tell you of an expedient which will enable you to avoid all suspicion."

Without waiting for the messenger's answer, the bandit turned his horse, and conducted him across the copse-wood into the open glades. After travelling for about half an hour he stopped at the entrance of a small hut, built of hurdles and covered with moss. During their slow and silent march, the Archduke's messenger had more than once contemplated the possibility of sliding off his horse, and making his escape ; but where could he go in so dark a night, and in a part of the forest, too, of which he knew nothing ? Besides, every time he looked round he perceived a human form silently following his horse with unequal steps : it was the lame hunchback, whose singular movements seemed, in the obscurity of the night, to have about them something mysterious and unearthly. He therefore gave up all hope of escape, and resigned himself quietly to the guidance of his new companions.

On arriving at the cabin, Knops made the traveller get down, took the horse into the hut, and said to its master, "Take off the bit ; there is some hay in that corner, which you will give to your horse ; it is not right that the poor beast should suffer from want any more than ourselves. I will strike a light, and you shall judge of our palace. It is not quite so splendid as that of your prince, but in this place we never require to give lodging to archdukes, though we sometimes have occasion to entertain their messengers.* Do not be alarmed : you are as safe here as if a party of royal dragoons were watching over you. You only see two of us at present ; but in case of need, a slight signal will bring us an ample reinforcement."

The messenger had now somewhat recovered from his alarm, and, seeing that he had fallen into the hands of one of the *gueux* of the woods, of which he had heard so many recent stories, he at once determined upon the course he should pursue.

The brigand meanwhile had produced a candle and struck a light, and Jean Brinck was now able to look around him, and to reconnoitre the robber's den into which he had so unexpectedly fallen. It was a miserable

enough apartment, but nevertheless well secured from the weather. He remarked particularly two enormous dogs who ran joyously round their master, and who had been so carefully trained by him, that they had not ventured to utter the slightest sound at his arrival. He now saw, too, that the faces of the two men were concealed by hoods and masks.

"Light the fire, marquis," said Knops, addressing the lame hunchback; "and you, our guest, do you attend to your horse."

Whilst the little man put a match to the opening of an old earthen stove full of dried wood and pit-coal, which instantly caught fire, Jean Brinck unsaddled his horse, who, like a true philosopher, had of his own accord approached a bundle of hay, as sweet to his tooth, in the corner of this cabin, as if it had been in the stables of his royal master.

"Now, marquis, arrange the table," said the robber; and with these words he went out, leaving the hut in charge of the hunchback and the two dogs, until, at the end of a few minutes, he returned, loaded with a ham, some bread, and an enormous bottle of Brabant wine. The table was a rough plank, which the hunchback, by means of two piles of bricks, had raised about a foot from the ground in front of the stove. The two bandits were soon seated upon some straw on the ground, and the traveller, whom they invited to do the same, willingly yielded to the solicitations of hunger and thirst. In truth, notwithstanding his uneasiness, he saw with some pleasure the robber about to offer him, with great politeness, one of the three goblets which he had just filled.

"Here is to your good health, sir," said Knops; "banish all care for this evening, and for to-morrow too; trust to me to get you out of all trouble. I leave you to think what you like about my intentions as regards the necklace; but to yourself personally, I wish every kind of prosperity: to your good health, then!"

Jean Brinck, after having partaken of the offered cheer, began to pluck up his courage, and, seeing the good-humour of the bandit, he ventured to reply to the

subject of the necklace, and to broach his intended proposal.

"But why do you keep me here all night?" said he.

"You will know that to-morrow morning," answered Knops.

"You have taken this necklace; I suppose, however, it is not the object itself you want, but its value?"

"It is as you say."

"Then, you must know, the Archduke sets great store by this jewel, and as you seem so frank and honest . . . don't you think we can come to some arrangement? I could bring you a sum of money, and you could return

"Your pearls? Very possibly. I will not ask you what they cost; it is your interest to conceal the truth: but to-morrow we can consider the arrangement which you propose. This evening take your supper with a quiet mind, and do not hurry yourself. We have time enough before us; the nights are long at this season, and we do not expect any more visitors."

The supper was in fact long; the hunchback, who, as well as his companion, took care to keep his face covered with the crape mask, ate enormously without saying a word, while the two dogs also came in for their share of the good things.

About nine o'clock Knops wished his guest good night, and, pointing out a corner of the cabin where a straw bed was prepared for him, extinguished the lamp. The poor messenger, though overcome with fatigue, was so perplexed by a variety of strange emotions, that he dozed away the night, which seemed to him interminably long, without being able to compose himself to sleep. Daylight did not appear till nearly eight o'clock; the weather was still gloomy, and the rain was falling as heavily as ever.

"Break your fast, marquis," said Knops to the hunchback, "and be off quickly,—you know whither."

The little man took a piece of bread, which he covered with a slice of the fat ham, and, approaching the robber, addressed some words to him in a low voice.

"Certainly," answered Knops aloud; "you will be back

the sooner. My companion," added he, "turning to the messenger, "wishes to borrow your horse for a short journey, so that, instead of keeping you here till noon, you may probably be at liberty in an hour: what do you say to it?"

"My horse!" exclaimed Jean. "Suppose he does not return with it?"

"For what do you take us?" said the robber, sternly.

"I do not suspect either of you; but suppose your companion should be arrested?"

"Arrested! he arrested, never! neither on foot nor on horseback! Go, my boy, and, without hurrying the beast, be back as soon as possible. We shall be waiting for you; and our friend here is impatient. Bring back with you some tobacco, and a flask of *eau-de-vie*; that will not detain you long, and I wish to offer our guest the stirrup-cup before he leaves us. We will meet you under the Woodpecker's Tree."

The hunchback then took his departure.

"Now," said the bandit, "we will breakfast *tête-à-tête*. You must not leave our abode fasting. We have all the morning before us; and as I see you are now more at your ease, I will light the fire."

The messenger breakfasted, however, in great uneasiness, for his unfortunate adventure weighed heavily upon his spirits: at last, he returned to his proposition of purchasing the necklace.

"Wait a little," said Knops; "I can tell you nothing until the return of the marquis. Eat your breakfast, and I will then conduct you to the tree, where we shall find your horse."

When he judged that it was time to depart, the brigand bandaged the eyes of the messenger, and led him across the wood by a route which occupied them a good half-hour. Having arrived at the oak called the Woodpecker's Tree, he unbound his eyes, and Brinck soon perceived his horse, which had safely returned with the robber's companion on his back, and was standing quietly at the foot of the tree. The hunchback slid down to the ground, said one or two words in an under-tone to Knops, and then gave him the bottle of *eau-de-vie*.

"Now, this is what you must do," said the bandit, turning to Jean: "The archduke can have his pearl necklace again, if such is his desire. But we do not call upon you, as our guest, to redeem it; that would be unjust; and I am for equity in all things. You will find the jewel in the Prince's bank; and by paying there a thousand Brabant florins, which are advanced to us upon it, you will immediately have it returned to you. Thus the whole affair is clear and straightforward; there is no bargaining or cheating. Here is the document they have given the marquis, and which will establish your right to the necklace. Now," continued he, uncorking the bottle, "here is to your health! Drink a cup before starting; and good success to you!"

Whilst Jean swallowed a mouthful of the brandy, the robber added, "We shall perhaps never meet again; but remember me only as KNOPS!"

At this formidable name the messenger returned the bottle to the bandit as quickly as possible, spurred his horse, and set off at full gallop, happy to have escaped without further mischief.

When he related his adventure to the Archduke, orders were instantly given to search the woods of Cambre; but all was in vain; no robbers could be found. The necklace was redeemed by paying the thousand florins, which, as may be supposed, was done readily enough, since in reality it cost forty thousand. The archduke congratulated himself on having established a "lombard" (in other words, a pawnbroker's shop) at Brussels; but he ordered that henceforth no pledges should be received, except from persons who were well known.

It may easily be imagined, however, that this law did not prevent stolen goods from being frequently brought and received. "Lombards" have been liable to the same abuse from that day to the present, not only in Flanders, but everywhere else.



The Sword-Dance.

GREAT was the rejoicing and splendid the ceremonies in the venerable pile of the church of St. Alban of Namur, when the count of that city brought home his bride. This was the Count Henry who had so long a reign—a warlike and boisterous prince—the same who has been surnamed the Blind, on account of the sad malady with which he was afflicted in his old age. He had inherited Namur and Luxembourg, and had now wedded Laurette, the daughter of Thierry, Count of Flanders. She was coming, on this occasion, to the church of St. Alban, escorted by the magistrates of the city, and by the different trades, who marched in procession, with music playing and banners flying.

Among the crowd which surrounded the church, a stranger stood conspicuous, who, report said, had just returned from Palestine. His costume was that of a warrior; he had the heavy doublet of buffalo-hide, the iron-bound boots, the helmet and its vizor, while a ponderous sword hung from his side, and the red cross of a Crusader gleamed upon his breast. His bearing seemed to denote both vigour and courage; strong passions had stamped their seal upon his brow and eye; and his dilated nostrils and up-drawn head, together with a sardonic curl about the corners of his mouth, gave a something of hardness and severity to the expression of his very handsome face. This warrior's name was Roger of Peronne.

He stared carelessly in the face of every young maiden, but without vouchsafing to any a settled look, and apparently finding none worthy of fixing his thoughts, even for a moment, until a murmur of admiration attracted his attention to an object to which no heart could refuse its homage.

It was Sibylle Buley, surnamed the Rose of Namur, the only daughter of a rich cloth-merchant.

She was just eighteen, and her childlike features beamed with beauty and freshness, no less than with purity. She calmly advanced towards the church, receiving with the unconscious joy of a child the homage which had become her habitual tribute.

The looks and words of her fellow-citizens had never called a blush to her cheeks ; but when, as she placed her foot on the first step, her eyes met the fiery gaze of Roger, the maiden shuddered, she knew not why, and suddenly drew the hood of her mantle closer around her face.

" Either I pleased her, or she is a coquette ! " exclaimed Roger aloud, as she hurried into the church.

" A coquette she may be," said a soldier who stood by, leaning on his halbert. " Our rosebud certainly does not dislike hearing her own praises ; and she is spoiled enough, there is no doubt. She has never known a creature whose heart did not beat the more gladly at the sight of her. It may be that your look embarrassed her, too ; but, as to pleasing her seriously, Messire, 'tis a very different thing. Many and many of our best and bravest have paid their court to her, and she has not declared herself in favour of any one of them. But oh, Messire, if one glance at her has made you look so much less scornful, what will it be when you see her dance ? She is a sylph, a fairy. Do you go to the dance before her father's house this evening ? "

" I shall certainly be there," answered the Crusader, and, crossing himself, he entered the church. But among the crowds that thronged the building, he sought the pretty Sibylle in vain ; and though he watched again upon the steps until the court descended, after the vows of inauguration had been taken, and the people had dispersed, he did not see her again. She had left the church by a side-door.

This circumstance gave fresh fuel to his vanity.

" She has remarked me, and she is a little coquette," he said to himself, and then, hurrying to his lodging, he

dressed himself in his most becoming style, curled his black beard and hair, exchanged his helmet for a cap of Asiatic velvet ; and then, in order to pass away the time, went to take a promenade in the square of St. Hilary.

Before long he fell in with the soldier, his acquaintance of the morning, and saluting him as an old friend, he asked at what hour the dance was to take place.

"At four o'clock," said the serjeant with a laugh : "I see you are anxious to meet her again. Ha ! ha ! don't think you will be the only admirer there, my friend."

"But you have told me that she has no preference for any among her lovers ?"

"I told you no such thing : who can read the heart of a woman ? I told you she has *shown* no preference ; but as for feeling any,—well, you shall judge for yourself : your eyes may prove more piercing than ours." Roger drew up his lofty head with renewed pride. "We shall see, we shall see !" he murmured, and then added aloud :

"Come, it is time ; shall we go ?"

"Oh, there is plenty of time," replied the serjeant : "but let us go, if you are impatient : we can wait in the hostelry of St. John."

The dances were hardly begun ere Roger rose from his place, and advanced with steps in which his impatience was struggling with the dignity which he thought fit to assume.

Sibylle had just arrived, simply and elegantly attired, and lovely as a rose, and had taken her stand with other young girls upon a platform which looked down upon the dancing-ground. At sight of her a young man of five or six and twenty, active in figure, and bright and intelligent in countenance, disengaged himself from the crowd, hurried towards her, and invited her to dance.

The face of the youth was eager and animated ; that of the maiden was instantly covered with blushes ; while her sudden change of expression, her timid glance, her constrained smile, and the ceremonious manner with which she placed her fingers in Hubert's grasp, were but too plainly noticed by the Crusader.

"There," he whispered to the serjeant, "stands he whom she looks upon as her future husband."

"I had guessed as much too, but I dared not say it," answered his companion.

The dancers began; and, on perceiving the Crusader, Sibylle could not resist a strange fascination of dread and horror which attracted her attention towards this stranger. At every turn of the dance she found her eyes fixed upon him, with a vague presentiment, for which she could not account; while at every glance of the maiden, the heart of the Crusader swelled more and more with pride.

This dance over, he, in his turn, requested the honour of her hand for the next. Sibylle trembled, and her cheek reddened; but not daring to refuse a stranger, she advanced with him to the dancing-ground. Before long, the Crusader recovered from his unusual embarrassment, and boldly declared that he wished to become a suitor for her hand. Bewildered and taken by surprise, the maiden could only murmur a few unmeaning words, and as soon as escape was possible, she hurried away to her father's house.

"Never mind, you shall yet be my wife!" muttered the stranger; and, answering the sullen glance which Hubert flung towards him, with an insolent stare, he turned to the serjeant.

"She must be my wife," he whispered: "I renounce my profession for ever."

The man of Namur looked puzzled.

"You travel fast, my friend!" he said, "and if she prefers the young man you have remarked, you will not find it easy to detach her from him. If our girls are coquettes, they are not unfaithful. Moreover, Hubert is the best match in the town, and as brave and honest as he is handsome. You will see him at the tournament to-morrow; that is, if you mean to go."

"I shall go, and I shall fight, too; that is, if they will allow me."

And so saying, he entered the hostelry.

The next morning, on the river's bank sat an old serf, busily sharpening on a sandstone the blade of a sword. At the same time he was singing some verses in honour of his master, the *refrain* of which was to the effect that the fame of Roger of Peronne was known throughout the world, and that both in real combats and in warlike sports he had always carried off the prize.

"Always, and in every combat! that's a fine story, indeed!" cried a Fleming, one of the young countess's suite, who just then came up from behind, and laid his hand on the old man's shoulder; "and who, I pray you, may this brave and happy mortal be?"

"Roger of Peronne, a Crusader."

"Does he join the sword-dance, then, that you are thus preparing his weapon?"

"He will."

"He will! a stranger, whom nobody knows!" cried the Fleming.

"Have you not, then, as much courtesy here as they have at Alost? When your citizens have had their dance as usual, doubtless they will permit strangers to enter the lists. We will show them that other people know how to play at the sword-dance besides the good people of Namur."

"Indeed! I shall be glad to see that. The Lady Laurette, our dear countess, Heaven bless her! means herself to be judge of these dances. They say, too, that at her petition, my lord the count himself intends to reward the victor. But what are you doing?" he added, abruptly, seizing the arm of the serf. "You are taking off the edge of the blade and sharpening the point. How is this?"

"You are wrong, comrade; or, at least, if I have been doing so, I must have done it through carelessness," answered the serf, who seemed confused, however, as if he had been accused of a crime. "The fault, if it be one, is easily repaired."

And again he rubbed the point of the sword upon the stone, but in a manner more likely to complete than to destroy his work. The Fleming was, again about

angrily to remonstrate, when Roger of Peronne himself appeared upon the threshold of his door, and called out to his serf, who immediately hastened to carry sword and stone into his master's house.

"That man has seen nothing, Messire," said the old man, as he laid the stone down on the straw-covered floor of his master's vaulted chamber. After whetting the sword still more a few minutes, he added :—

"There's a point which would pierce an iron cuirass, if the boy is bold enough to measure himself against you. My Lord, you may go and bid the death-bell toll for him."

"Truce to thy chattering tongue, knave ; it runs too fast for thy wit," said Roger, angrily. "It is well," he murmured, as he examined the sword ; "he will die, and then no obstacle remains between her and me. Pho ! I have been here two days, and I know more already than all these wiseacres of Namur. It was only yesterday evening, at the count's *soirée*, that Hubert entreated his powerful intercession with Sibylle's father for his marriage. The father consents, and their marriage is actually in preparation ; but we shall see when it will take place," he added, after a pause.

In a moment after he raised his head, and with a cold sardonic smile said :—

"This point can only wound ; and I must be sure of death. Open my wallet, Jerome, and bring hither the little obony box which it contains."

The slave did as he was bid, and Roger, taking from it a small bit of paste upon a silver spatula, spread it upon the point of his sword, which became instantly black.

The seven youths who were to join in the sword dances were already at their posts ; they were dressed in white ; their caps, their doublets, even their shoes, were of white cloth ; only their sashes were of a bright crimson, and they wore a crimson ribbon above the elbow and below the knee ; knots of crimson ribbon ornamented their shoes, the hilts of their swords, and the right side of their caps.

As soon as the signal was given, the young men rushed upon each other, Hubert at their head, the bravest and most active ; and for an hour and more the public were entertained with their mock combats and trials of skill. At last came the struggle for the prize. Six long cords were stretched upon the ground, at the distance of four feet from each other. Each of the six who had been first in the dance had one of these cords assigned him, which he was not to leave, but along which he might rush to and fro in pursuit of his adversary. Meanwhile the latter had to dance in time to certain music, always keeping his foot on one of the six cords, and, if he was touched by the sword of his companions, or if he lost the time in the dance, he forfeited all chance of the prize. He was allowed, however, to use his own sword, if he could, to parry the blows aimed at him by his adversary. It was a difficult game. One after another, all the combatants failed, and Hubert stood alone, and victor.

While he was kneeling before Laurette of Alsatia, who threw the golden chain around his neck, and while he directed his eyes towards his blushing Sibylle, Roger was seen to advance towards the herald, who immediately, by a sound of his trumpet, commanded silence, and cried, with a loud voice :—

“In honour of the good town of Namur, under permission of my lord the count, a stranger demands to enter on the joust of cords, alone, with the victor.”

Before the acclamations of the people had died away, Hubert was again in the lists. Roger, much against his will, was stripped of his leather jerkin and his gauntlets, and the white cloth and crimson sash were donned instead, and, at a signal from the countess, the struggle began ; but, suddenly, one of the young countess's suite was seen to push through the crowd until he had penetrated close to the platform where she sat, and had succeeded in passing a piece of paper into her hand : it was the Fleming with whom we have already made acquaintance. In another moment the fluttering of the countess's handkerchief, and the herald's wand clifown

into the lists, suspended the combat. There was a dead silence.

● "What are your commands, lady?" said the count to his bride.

"With my noble lord's consent," replied the princess, "let the champions exchange weapons."

This command fell like a thunderbolt upon the Crusader. All his courage seemed paralyzed, and he stood pale and motionless, a cold sweat breaking out upon his brow, like a man who has heard his death-warrant pronounced. Recovering his composure, however, by a violent effort, as he felt that all eyes were turned upon him, he exclaimed,—

"Who doubts my honour? Is my sword too heavy? I am willing to take that of any of the combatants who have been vanquished. In my service it shall wipe out the stain of a lost combat;" and he flung his sword at his feet.

But Hubert took it up, and gracefully presented his own good blade in exchange.

Again the Crusader became pale as death, and drew back shuddering from his adversary.

There was a dead pause until the count's voice was again heard sternly demanding,—

"What is all this? Is your sword enchanted, man, that you dare not fight without it or touch another? Let the weapon be brought to me."

Hubert moved to obey, but Roger flung himself upon him to hold him back, and said, in a choking voice, and with a look of agony which Hubert never forgot :—

"Pardon me; I thought some insult was intended to my honour. I accept the combat."

The joust began again; it lasted during a long quarter of an hour, and at length the younger combatant, worn out with fatigue, stumbled and fell, parrying a blow which was aimed at him; but in falling, he slightly pricked his adversary on the hip. A loud cry of rage and agony rang through the lists, and the Crusader dropped his sword, tottered a moment, and with another cry fell heavily on the ground.

He was quickly raised ; but he was no longer alive : and his blackened skin and distorted lineaments caused the spectators to declare that the devil, with whom he must have made a contract, had strangled him. The body and the sword were both burned ; and it was not until some hours later, when Jerome was found waiting without the city walls, with two horses, that the story of the poisoned sword, the plan for carrying off the Rose of Namur, and the whole fiendish plot, was brought to light.

According to the summary justice of those old days, the unhappy serf was hanged on the spot.

But who can describe the happiness of Hubert, as he sat at the feet of his beloved Sybille, each rendered doubly dear to the other by the perils from which they had so narrowly escaped. It was not long ere Namur was gladdened by a gayer wedding than it had ever seen before ; and in many a bold youth and lovely girl may still be traced the lineage of the brave victor in the jousts and of the Rose of Namur.



Gerhard, the Headsman's Son.

CHAPTER I.

ON the eve of Pentecost, in the year 1507, the night was more gloomy than usual in Antwerp ; the darkness seemed as if it could be touched with the finger ; like a thick impenetrable cloud it lay extended over the whole city. No sound was heard through the deep obscurity, save the dropping of water from the eaves of the houses, the pattering of the small thick rain against the window-panes, and, at intervals, the distant and monotonous peal of a church bell. Although it was not yet nine o'clock, and but few of the citizens had retired to rest, the most profound silence reigned in the streets.

Whoever had chanced at that hour to be in the neighbourhood of the Archers' Place, and could have penetrated with his eye the thick darkness, might have perceived a man who, with his back leaning against a poplar, and his arms crossed upon his breast, stood absorbed in deep contemplation. From time to time unintelligible words broke from his lips, accompanied by energetic gestures ; then he would utter a hollow sigh, like the deep breathing of one who is relieved of a heavy load. A peculiar smile, too, hovered round his mouth ; not that open smile which indicates joy and happiness, but one of that contracted expression which reveals internal anguish, and which, in man, often takes the place of tears which are wanting to his despair.

O truly wretched, a thousand times wretched, was this man ! Little had he to dread the torments of hell ; for twenty years already had he carried a hell in his bosom !

When at his birth he uttered the earliest cry of greeting to the dawning life, his mother imprinted not on his forehead the sweet kiss of welcome ; nay, she cast the infant from her : neither did his father experience any joy ; on

the contrary, with tears in his eyes, he begged from Heaven the death of this his firstborn, of his only son : he wept over him, as if he had been the fruit of some horrible crime.

And as the unhappy child, nourished rather with his mother's tears than with her milk, grew up, and came to mix with other children, he was jeered at, cursed, and scouted, as if an infernal mark had been imprinted on his forehead ; and yet that child was so gentle, so patient ; not one sign of anger or displeasure against his persecutors escaped him : his father alone knew what bitterness was gathering in the heart of his son.

The child had now become a man, and, in spite of his sufferings, his frame was robust and well developed. He longed for social pleasure, for human sympathy, for kindness and esteem ; but the hatred and contempt to which he was doomed quitted him not. He needed but to show himself, and curses, outrages, and insults were heaped upon him ; and if he shrunk not away like a slave whose abject looks sued for compassion, he was immediately driven away with blows, like a very dog. For him there was no justice upon earth ; it was only left for him to pray ; to God alone could he look for consolation and support.

Such was the life of that man who was leaning against the poplar—his soul a prey to cruel anguish and despair ; and yet his heart was full of feeling and affection ; his intellect was noble and vigorous ; his features were commanding ; his demeanour proud and manly ; his voice sweet and grave—and so it sounded at this moment, as he lifted his hands towards heaven and exclaimed,—

“ O God ! my God ! if Thy holy will has created me for suffering, give me then strength to bear my burthen ! My brain is on fire ! my head is distracted ! O God, save me from despair ! Root in my heart the belief that Thou art good—That thou art just—for fearful doubts begin to penetrate my soul ! ”

Slowly his voice decreased, and his words melted away into a dull, unintelligible mutter ; then, starting suddenly up, he hastened along with rapid strides until he turned

up a neighbouring street. Here his pace became slower, and at times he stood quite still, like one who, in order the better to reflect, arrests the movements of the body. All at once a dry, rattling sound, like the cry of a night-bird, escaped from his breast.

"Ah! thirst is burning up my bosom," he gasped; "I must drink!"

With these words he pursued his way stealthily along the houses, pausing and listening at each one where he saw a light; but in all he heard the voices of men, and that was enough to make him avoid them. At last, having reached St. John's Street, he remained for some time before a tavern, and listened attentively at every window. An expression of pleasure then flitted over his features, and he murmured to himself,—

"There is no one here,—I can drink."

He raised the latch of the door, and entered. He had fancied, because there was no noise, that the tavern was empty: what then was his surprise when he found it filled with men, who, with cans by their side, were seated round a table, and looking with earnest eyes at an individual who was playing some sleight-of-hand tricks. While he was listening at the window, the juggler had, in fact, been making preparations for a fresh trick, and the eyes and attention of the bystanders being riveted on his movements, the utmost stillness in consequence prevailed.

The stranger drew back on seeing so numerous a company, and would have quitted the house, but every head was immediately turned towards him, and he feared the probable consequences of such suspicious behaviour; advancing therefore to the fire-place, he ordered a jug of beer. The hostess eyed her new guest with distrustful looks, and would willingly have peered under his hat in order to see his face; but the stranger, perceiving this, bent his head still lower, and thus avoided her scrutinizing eyes.

While the hostess ran to the cellar for the beer, the eyes of all the company were turned upon the new comer, and they began to whisper to each other. One individual in particular seemed resolved on annoyance, and from his gestures not unlikely even to re-

sort to violence against the stranger. The latter had turned his back to the table, and was waiting for the beer, while every limb trembled under his broad cloak with fear and anxiety. The hostess soon reappeared, and offered the stranger the brimming measure. He took one eager draught which half emptied it, put it down on the table, and placed a two-stiver piece in the hostess' hand. Before she could give him back the change, one of the guests rushed from the other side of the room, and threw the beer that remained in the measure into the face of the trembling stranger.

"Accursed!" cried he, "how? you dare to come and drink in our society? What should prevent me from breaking every bone in your body? Esteem yourself lucky, fellow, that I do not soil my hands with your miserable blood!"

This unfortunate youth was in fact the only son of the public executioner of Antwerp; his name was Gerhard, and he numbered little more than twenty years. We can now understand why he shunned the presence of other men, for the reception he now met with was always the fate of an executioner who would venture among his fellow-citizens.

Gerhard bent his head and looked at the beer which was trickling down his clothes; but he remained silent, uttering not a syllable in reply to the abuse of his adversary: the latter, on the contrary, grew all the more insulting, and could find no end to his invectives, at length assailing even the hostess with harsh language.

"Look you, dame, to-morrow all our company will quit your house, and repair to the St. Sebastian. We will spend no more money here; to-morrow you would no doubt put this murderer's can before one of us!"

"There, look,—there lies the can!" cried the hostess, alarmed at the thought of losing her customers; and she threw the vessel on the ground, so that it broke into a thousand pieces. "Can I help it, if this miscreant comes into the house of an honest person? Wilt thou take thyself out of my house, scoundrel, man-torturer! art thou not yet going, devil's-slip?"

Until now the youth had been silent under all these invectives ; at last he proudly raised his head, and calmly answered :

"Woman, I am going. Although the son of the executioner, I have more compassion for my fellow-men than you. Because the laws and the claims of justice require it, my father punishes the guilty ; but you inflict injury upon me when you are not obliged to do so, and without my ever having done you wrong. Reflect that you are sinning against God, in thus treating me like a dog !"

The tones of the young man's voice were so gentle and his words so touching, that the hostess was surprised. She could not understand how a man should remain thus calm after being so rudely treated. A tear started involuntarily to her eyes ; she took the two-stiver piece, and throwing it to Gerhard, said :

"There, I do not want your money,—take it and go in peace."

The fellow who had thrown the beer in Gerhard's face seized the piece of money, which had fallen to the ground, glanced at it, and dashed it with a gesture of horror upon a table :

"See !" he exclaimed, "there is blood—human blood, on the coin !"

All the others pressed round the table, but fell back again in affright, as if they beheld the body in whose veins that imaginary blood had flowed. A universal cry was raised against the unhappy youth.

He knew only too well how false the assertion was, for he had received the coin that very evening in church from the chair-keeper. This act of injustice excited him so deeply, that he lost all his equanimity, and became pale with anger. He pressed his hat deeper over his brows, sprang with one bound to the table where the piece of money was still lying, and exclaimed :

"Fools ! why thus rave about blood ? Do you not see that the piece is red like the copper coin you carry about you ? You call me son of an executioner ; it is by God's will that I am so, but I rejoice in my heart, and

feel proud that neither in name, or in word, or in deed, do I resemble such vile caitiffs as you ! ”

Scarcely were the words out of his mouth, than a torrent of blows rained upon him. He defended himself lustily, but the number of his assailants was overpowering. Curses and imprecations filled the air, cans and glasses strewed the ground in a thousand fragments, and the hostess screamed loudly for help. After stoutly resisting for a few moments longer, Gerhard suddenly found himself precipitated into the middle of the street, stunned with the blows which twenty fists had inflicted upon him. He arranged his cloak, however, placed his hat straight, and proceeding quietly on his way, the remembrance of this brawl was soon banished from his mind.

At the time this scuffle took place there was sitting in Antwerp a maiden, who with beating heart awaited with anxiety the arrival of the headman's son, as if a secret sense had forewarned her that some misfortune was happening to him.

She alone was to that unhappy youth an angel of consolation, and she loved him so much the more as she knew how all others despised and execrated him. Her love had been given in spite of the opposition of her mother, the reproaches of her neighbours, and the raileries of the other maidens. Nay, when they referred insultingly to the bloody office of Gerhard's father, and for greater provocation called her the executioner's wife, then she rejoiced in her inmost soul, for she felt and believed more fully the generosity and purity of her love, and that she was entertaining an affection agreeable to God. And was not the good maiden right ? Wealth and possessions she had none wherewith to assist her neighbour according to the commandment of the Lord ; therefore did she bestow the more precious treasure of her soul, a pure and innocent love, on the most unfortunate of her fellow-citizens.

Lina inhabited a small apartment on the Vlier bridge, with her mother and brother. Franz, the latter, was an honest young fellow, who worked five days a week in the sweat of his brow ; and a more clever or industrious carpenter was not to be found in the town : the consequence

was that, regularly every Saturday evening, he put a neat little sum of money into his mother's lap, on account of which she loved him greatly.

While Gerhard was hastening to their abode, Lina and her mother sat before the hearth busily occupied in working lace. As their scanty means did not allow them to have more than one light, they were obliged to work facing each other. At the other side of the room stood the bench where Franz was working. The clean and freshly-washed floor was strewn with white sand, a cross and a few holy pictures were hung upon the walls, and one could see, from the general character of the little apartment, that those who lived there, with all their industry earned little more than their daily bread.

Gerhard usually came at about eight o'clock in the evening, and he had never gone beyond this hour without letting Lina know beforehand. It was now ten, and still he came not : the poor maiden knew not what to think ; and she was so wrapped up in her anxious thoughts, that she did not hear her mother speaking to her.

"Why, child, what is amiss, then ?" at length asked the old dame. "If he comes not to-day, he will come to-morrow : there are always days enough in the year."

"Aye, mother, that's well said ; but I am always in dread lest something should befall him ; he never comes so late—and folks are so ill-disposed !"

"Very true, child ; but then he is the headsmen's son, and such were always held in abhorrence. Didn't the citizens beat the executioner Hormen to death, and drown Hans near the Kroonenberg ?"

"And what had they both done, mother ?"

"That I don't know ;—nothing, I fancy. But it all comes of the executioner '*turning off*' so many innocent creatures."

"Must they not do, then, what the Judge ordains,—why not drown *him* rather than them ?"

"Ah ! Lina, that was always their lot : the proverb says, 'In a full litter of puppies, the smallest always gets least victuals and most bites.'"

"That is an odious proverb, mother."

When the two women had talked away thus for some time, the old dame at length grew tired of sitting up, and said :

"Come, Lina, let us go to bed ; it is time."

This proposal did not much please the maiden, for she had not yet given up all hopes of Gerhard's visit, though she hardly knew what to urge in order to keep her mother up longer. At last she said, "Let us work a little while yet, mother ; only three more flowers, and my piece of lace is finished."

"Make haste about it, then, child, for my eyes will not keep open."

"I am not going to bed yet," cried Franz from his corner ; "I must finish off this sewing-frame, for the hostess of the 'Little Horse' is coming for it to-morrow."

"Ah, young man," said the old dame, with a smile in which a half-reproach was perceptible, "thou hast certainly drunk more at the 'Little Horse' than thy pocket could afford ; but work on, so that the score may be paid. I am going to rest ; good night ! and do not forget your prayers."

Not long after she had quitted the room, Gerhard knocked at the house-door, and was admitted by Franz.

He looked pale and troubled ; but this did not surprise Lina, for rarely did she see her lover free from distressing thoughts. With a slow pace he advanced to the maiden, took her hand silently, and in silence pressed it to his breast : this was his usual greeting ;—words were wanting, but his eyes expressed the deepest gratitude and the most ardent affection.

"Gerhard !" cried Lina, "what is amiss ? Your hand is cold as ice, and—oh, heavens !—you have blood upon your neck !"

"It is nothing, Lina ; I stumbled in the dark : happy were I if my body only suffered !"

These last words were accompanied by a sigh so deep and heavy, that Lina's soul was filled with anxiety. The stern and penetrating look of Gerhard's eyes made her apprehend some terrible news. With loving solicitude, she wiped away the traces of blood from his face, seizing

his hand, and warmly pressing it, as if to inspire him with courage and consolation, and make him feel in that pressure all the fervour of her love. Gerhard contemplated the young girl with a fixed and immovable eye, until no longer able to bear that look, she fell back into her chair and cried :

“Oh, Gerhard, do not look at me thus ; you kill me with those eyes——”

The youth let his head droop down, and looked upon the ground ; but he quickly raised his eyes again, and said, with an expression of terrible anguish :

“Listen to me, Lina ; I have not much to say ; perhaps you hear me for the last time.—As children we played together ; something which we could not account for, but which has now grown into an irresistible passion, attracted us to each other. You—angel that you are—did not then know what a thing it is to be an executioner’s son ; nor did you yet know that he who hangs, breaks upon the wheel, or marks with the branding-irons, is laden with more ignominy than those who are hanged, broken, or branded by him. Later on, you understood this better ; but your pure soul was loath to concur in the injustice of mankind, and the more terrible my misfortune appeared before your eyes, the more earnestly did your love increase,—for you knew that I needed love to save me from utter despair. Yes, but for this I should have been lost ; for I believed in nothing save in the justice of God, which promised a better life, and in the imperishableness of your affection. Men persecute me like one accursed ; their hatred for me has even now caused this blood upon my neck. But all this were as nothing, my beloved ; no complaint should escape my lips, even if my limbs were crushed between two stones ; but the torture, the suffering, lie here —— ;” and he pointed with his finger to his pale forehead, while he continued : “To know that one, of the most irreproachable life, and with a heart the most loving and gentle, must needs be scouted, derided, and hated by all the world,—O, Angel of Goodness, is not this more than man can bear ; must not this desolating conviction crush the very heart ?”

"Long have I known this," sighed Lina, who had listened with moistened eyes; "does my heart not feel all that troubles yours; were your eyes ever clouded without mine filling with tears?"

"Hitherto we flattered ourselves with the hope," continued Gerhard, "that some unexpected event might deliver me from the hateful office, and that we might dwell quietly and unknown in some town far away; but, alas! Lina, this was only a vain dream. The dreadful hour is drawing on—to-morrow, aye, to-morrow, you will see your Gerhard standing on the scaffold, and armed with the sword of justice: therefore is this hand, which must deal the death-stroke, as cold as ice—there, feel!" And with these words he stretched forth to his beloved his hand, cold and livid.

"My father is lying ill in bed," he continued, "and the judge has ordered me to execute Hermann the fisherman to-morrow."

As if Gerhard's former energy of soul had suddenly passed over to Lina, her tears ceased to flow, and casting upon him a glance still more determined than his own, she demanded:

"Well, and what dost thou mean?"

"I mean that you shouldst forget me, and abandon me to the sorrow and contempt which everywhere attend me. Oh, Lina, grant me this consolation!"

"Is then my love no longer of any worth to you, Gerhard; is it also a trouble to your heart?"

"No, my beloved! it is, on the contrary, the only good which God has left me; but something else impels me to ask of you an eternal farewell. For my sake you have submitted your tender life to the outrages and insults of others; you have surrounded the executioner's son with the mantle of your love, in order to render him impervious to the shafts of hatred; you have made a sacrifice of yourself in order to endow me with a sentiment which otherwise I had never known. But to-morrow, reflect upon it well, Lina, I cease to be what I was before; from to-morrow I myself am the executioner. And do you think I expect so much self-sacrifice

at your hands ;—that I can suffer men to taunt you with having an executioner for your lover ? Do you think me base enough to touch you, who are purity and innocence itself, with these hands,—hands which will be steeped in human blood, perhaps in the blood of innocence ? Tell me at least, Lina, that you know me too well ever to imagine I could require this.”

A strange alteration had come over the features of the young girl, an expression of joy spread over her countenance, her eyes shone more brightly, and a sweet smile hovered round her lips. She calmly replied—

“ Ah, well ! my friend, I understand perfectly what you would say ; I know well your noble character ; but do you imagine that I do not bear the same love as you, or that my heart is less noble and devoted than yours ? I will show you the contrary.”

So saying, she twined her arms round Gerhard's neck, and kissed away the wrinkles from his brow.

“ Gerhard,” she cried, “ what does that kiss say ? ”

“ That an angel must at that moment have pressed upon your forehead a crown of blessedness.”

“ You understand me now,” continued Lina, “ that I am yours, to-morrow as to-day, to-morrow and for ever ! I will cling to you, be you executioner or not, here or upon the scaffold. Gerhard, I know what my duty is : in spite of all the outrages of mankind, I shall be your wife, and I will pour into your wounds the balm of consolation and love.”

“ No, Lina !—never ! I should deserve eternal execration were I to accept such a sacrifice. Draw you down with me into the abyss of shame ? Oh no !—never ! ”

“ I will not abandon you, Gerhard ! I will cling to you, and you shall not be strong enough to tear yourself away from me. Do you think I would let you die ? Did you but know how proud, how lion-hearted I feel at this moment ! With greater confidence shall I approach the holy altar, since I am sure that God is well pleased with me ! ”

To describe what Gerhard felt at these words would be impossible ; he cast a long look of wonder upon her

who thus generously yielded herself up for his sake. After a lengthened pause, a more radiant expression flitted over his features, a heavy sigh burst from his breast, he raised his eyes to heaven, and cried—

“Oh God, my God!—pardon me! I dared to complain in Thy presence, and thou hast bestowed upon me one of Thy angels!”

Lina's bosom beat higher at this thank-offering; a modest blush coloured her cheek, and her eyes beamed more brightly.

During this conversation Franz had been calmly working away at his bench, without troubling himself about the two; but now his frame was finished, and he was longing to get to bed. Gerhard remarked this, and took up his hat. While putting on his cloak, he said mournfully to Franz—

“To-morrow I am to cut off Hermann the fisherman's head.”

“Be well on your guard, then, for if you strike not straight, evil may come of it, as with Hansken; but I shall be there to aid you.”

Gerhard cast yet one look of deep distress upon Lina, dashed a tear from his eye, and turned towards the door: there she embraced him on parting, while she said—

“To-morrow I shall be at the scaffold: look at me well!”

And with moistened eyes and oppressed heart she listened to the steps of her beloved as they gradually died away in the street.

CHAPTER II.

WHEN Franz had so unexpectedly interrupted the conversation of the two lovers, Gerhard did not repeat his “eternal” farewell: he wished to spare Lina that sorrow. Nevertheless, in the eyes of the young executioner that parting was irrevocable, for he had taken a firm and unalterable resolution never to allow that pure and generous maiden to share his ignominious fate.

With rapid though trembling steps he hurried through the streets leading to his own abode, and, before he was aware of it, he found himself standing close to the ramparts. He stopped at a door, the red colour of which indicated the abode of the city executioner. On his knocking, a lad opened, and Gerhard asked,—

“Well, Jan, has the judge been here?”

“Yes; he has just gone. Your father bade me tell you that he is waiting for you.”

Gerhard hastened upstairs, and entered the room where his sick father lay on his bed of suffering.

The old man was pale and wasted; it was evident that some deep anguish had furrowed his cheeks, and forced his glassy eyes deep into their sockets. Although all maladies of debility thus wither up the body, reducing it well nigh to skin and bone, yet they leave to the soul all its energy; nay, it seems that, in proportion as the body wastes away, the spirit becomes strong and active. Such was the case with the old headsman; although physically weak and suffering, his mind was as clear as in the days of his most vigorous health. As Gerhard entered the room, the old man turned his piercing eyes upon him, but spoke not.

Gerhard hastily took a seat, and placed himself near his father's head; then he put his hand under the bed-clothes, seized his father's hand, pressed it, and cried out, in a trembling and anxious voice,—

“The judge has been here, my father! Tell me what is my sentence: am I to be an executioner?”

“I have tried every expedient,” replied the old man, sadly; “but he will not consent that our servant should take your place. Neither money nor entreaties will move him. You must become an executioner, my unhappy son!”

The unhappy man had fully anticipated this sentence; but the confirmation of it affected him deeply; his whole frame shook with emotion.

“To-morrow, then, my father—to-morrow my last hope of happiness must be extinguished,” he exclaimed despairingly; “to-morrow my miserable career must commence. I must become a salaried murderer!”

"My son," interrupted the old man, deeply moved, "prepare for a life full of outrage, full of suffering. Every head that you cut off, will fall upon your heart like a stone ; and when enough of them have fallen upon you, then you will die, even as I am dying now. But there is a judge above us who will recompense in proportion to the trials we have endured."

"But, my father, is there then no way, no means to be tried, no further hope ; must it absolutely be ?" asked Gerhard, with ever-growing anxiety.

"My son," said the old man, turning his eyes towards the table, "take the book which is lying there, and read the page which lies open."

Gerhard read with profound emotion his irrevocable destiny ; he dashed the book upon the ground with anger and indignation, while he cried,—

"Accursed law, which condemned me while yet unborn to blood-shedding and to shame ! O human race ! When still in the cradle, ye shouted at me,—'The child is none of ours ; it is an executioner's first-born. Let shame be his portion ! Let him, like a poisonous serpent, crawl all his life through, shunned and detested !' Bitter raillery ! And yet, while they pronounced upon me this fatal doom, I lay smiling in my cradle at the sparkling sun !"

Vainly the old man strove to soothe the unhappy youth ; but, hoping that rest might work some beneficial effect, he at length said,—

"This conversation has affected my chest ; I must now repose. One counsel, however, I will give you : when you mount the scaffold to-morrow, look not round upon the people ; the thousand eyes, burning with sanguinary curiosity, would confuse and make you tremble. Think that you are alone with the poor criminal ; and for the blow, take well your aim, for if it fall aside, and you cut not the head off at *one stroke*, a thousand voices will be lifted against you, and I should never more see you alive. Meanwhile, I will pray to God that in his mercy he may give thee strength to accomplish thy fatal task. Go, my son, and my blessing rest upon thee !"

CHAPTER III.

THE following day was one of spring-tide splendour. In beneficent warmth the sun shone from the clear azure vault, where only hovered here and there a light grey cloud. The influence of the pure fragrant air upon the citizens of Antwerp was plainly perceptible : all the streets were covered with promenaders, decked in their newest and best ; children were gambolling at full liberty ; and an innumerable swarm of small beetles, which had spread through the town from the surrounding fields, announced that Nature had again unbound her zone.

Towards ten o'clock the entire crowd had assembled at the church of Notre Dame, in order to see the procession which was just coming out. With heads uncovered, they gazed at all the splendid banners and standards as they went past ; but when at last the sacred Host approached, one and all sank down in silent prayer upon the stones of the market-place. Immediately following the procession were the six guilds ; and as soon as these had all gone by, a rapid movement among the people became perceptible, and every one began to shout, "The masque ! the masque !"

And in fact a monstrous fish, swimming about in coloured water, came forward into the market-place, bearing a Cupid on its back, and carrying an abundance of water in its stomach. From time to time it spurted the latter in considerable quantity from its nostrils, to a height of thirty feet ; and woe to him who happened to be standing near.

After the whale came the giant Druon-Antigon, turning his immense head from side to side, and pushing his gloomy eyes into the balcony windows of the highest houses. Then came the dolphins ; next, Neptune, in his chariot ; Mount Parnassus, with the Muses ; Fortune ; and many other emblematical figures.

While the crowd was saluting every new representa-

tion with loud acclamations and hurrahs, poor Gerhard sat by his father's sick-bed, with his arms crossed upon his breast. He was no longer the youth with those beautiful black locks which lent such manly expression to his features. Alas ! in one night he had become as old as his father !—deep wrinkles furrowed his cheeks, and his hair was white as snow. The tortures of his mind had worked so powerfully upon his nerves, that the slightest rustling made him tremble ; and when the bell of St. James's tolled another hour, a cold perspiration ran from his forehead, and his blanched hair stood on end.

Till two o'clock in the afternoon he sat there still ; at six the execution was to take place. The old man gazed anxiously upon him, and two big tears rushed into his failing eyes. At length he began :

"O Gerhard, Gerhard ! think of the affliction of your aged father ; think of what I must endure on beholding you thus. Do you not know that this state of mind is to me like a condemnation of death pronounced upon your head ? What else does it tell me but this :—'To-night the furious multitude will tear me in pieces, trample my quivering limbs under their feet ; and you, my father, may then endeavour to gather them up from the blood-stained ground ?'"

"Ay, too well I know it !" answered Gerhard with a fearful calm, which caused an icy shudder to run through all the old man's limbs. With all the strength he still had remaining, he raised himself up, drew Gerhard towards him, and twined his wasted arms round his neck, while, with streaming tears, he kissed his pale cheeks.

"Son, son !" he cried, "you are then resolved to die ? You calmly entertain that fearful thought ; you are about to cast yourself as a voluntary victim into the hands of the ferocious populace ! You will leave me, a feeble old man, a prey to my grief ! Surely you have not reflected, Gerhard, on the cruel ingratitude which such a resolution involves." These words, and that embrace, acted upon Gerhard like the touch from an enchanter's wand ; he could not withstand their powerful influence, and he re-

coiled from his very self. Love and filial duty were quickened anew within him, and his cheeks glowed as with a fever-flush.

"In God's name, then," he cried, "be it as you wish! Lament no more, father; thy son shall become an executioner!"

How grievously did poor Gerhard deceive himself and his father! It was not courage that animated him, but despair. Let us quit him for awhile, bathed in tears upon his father's breast: we shall soon meet him again elsewhere.

CHAPTER IV.

WE have already said that the condemned Hermann was to be executed at six o'clock. Long before the fatal hour, great crowds of people were seen pouring from St. George's Gate towards the place of execution.

The whole inclosure was covered with eager spectators; women of every age and condition were standing there with their sons and daughters; even the old man, who during the whole year had never quitted the fireside, now for once crept out of his corner, to catch a glimpse of the poor criminal as he died.

Near the scaffold stood a maiden, whose heart throbbed audibly in her troubled bosom; willingly would she have given free course to her tears, but she had come thither in order to inspire the new executioner with courage, and thus to insure the life of her beloved: it was Lina. Franz was there in his best brown mantle, and with his broad-brimmed hat by his side. Lina had made him aware of the danger which threatened Gerhard's life, and he had sworn to break the head of any one who dared to cast a stone at the executioner.

It was already beginning to grow dark as the fatal cart was led forward. The condemned, almost entirely clothed in black, with a priest by his side, was seated at the back of the vehicle; and in front stood Gerhard with the sword of justice, and an assistant by his side.

What was passing in the heart of the executioner no one could tell ; his eyes were cast down, he dared not look upon the multitude. Had not the sword proclaimed his office, one would with difficulty have guessed which was the criminal, Hermann or he : the former was evidently less oppressed by confusion and terror than Gerhard. He mounted the scaffold quite unconscious of all that surrounded him ; he beheld nothing,—he did not even perceive Lina, although she made him frequent signs through her brother.

The assistant wanted to conduct the condemned to the scaffold ; but the latter had not yet made his full confession, and wished to cleanse his conscience entirely, as he now saw there was no mercy for him. Perhaps he cherished the hope of liberating himself ; for the ever-increasing darkness seemed to afford such a chance ; those who were standing only a little removed from the scaffold could scarcely distinguish any more than that something was stirring. The multitude, meanwhile, became impatient, and the poor criminal was now brought to the block by force, and made to kneel down ; the assistant uncovered his neck, and pointed to a spot on it, as much as to say, "Strike there, Master !" At the sight of the bared flesh, which he was to hew, Gerhard woke up from his state of insensibility, his legs trembled so as to shake the scaffold, and the sword dropped from his hands. As the signal for the accomplishment of the sentence had not yet been given, the people took no heed of this ; the assistant picked up the weapon and reached it to Gerhard again : he held it convulsively in his grasp.

At last the crimson wand gave the death-signal ; but Gerhard heard nothing, and still less did he perceive the signal.

The people already began to murmur, when the assistant cried out :

"Quick, Master, quick !"

With all the courage and all the strength which still remained to him, Gerhard raised the sword aloft, above the neck of the condemned, and was firmly resolved to strike ; but shame and terror again seized upon him,

and he lost all consciousness of what he was doing. At length a sort of delirious rage took possession of him, and he was about to fetch a blow the like of which had never been dealt on a scaffold before, when suddenly the wretched criminal turned his head, perceived the uplifted sword, and gave forth a piteous cry. Gerhard's courage failed, and he let the sword drop upon the body, without even inflicting the smallest wound.

The malefactor, through whose frame at the falling of the sword a cold shudder had run, now sprang to his feet, stretched forth his arms towards the multitude, and cried for "help !" saying, that he was being wantonly tortured. This sufficed to excite the mob : a universal shout arose.

" Kill him outright—kill the man-torturer !"

Some stones whizzed through the air past Gerhard's head, but only a few, for the sandy soil did not afford many. The poor executioner, half out of his senses, rushed forward to the edge of the scaffold to face the multitude, crossed his arms upon his breast, and cried—

" Here I am,—kill me at once, ye bloodthirsty men !"

The rage of the populace now knew no bounds. The women and children, and the citizens of the better class, flew from the scaffold in every direction, while the furious mob, consisting of the dregs of the people, pressed nearer and nearer to the instrument of blood with furious shouts. The confusion grew wilder every moment. The officers of justice surrounded Gerhard and the condemned on the scaffold, in order to protect the former, and to keep fast hold of the other, who strove with all his might to escape. At this moment a man in a brown cloak glided rapidly on to the scaffold, drew Gerhard by the sleeve, and whispered in his ear—

" Quick, Lina entreats thee for God's sake and her love to come and speak just one word with her : she is down below ; come quickly !"

And with these words the man sprang to the right among the crowd, in order to show Gerhard the place where Lina was awaiting him ; the latter quickly followed—could he refuse his beloved a last adieu ? Scarcely was he close to Lina, when Franz threw the brown cloak

upon his shoulders, pressed the broad-brimmed hat over his brows, placed his arm in Lina's, and urging them both forward, he whispered—

“Quick!—steadily and boldly through the crowd, and wait in the wood yonder.”

And seeing that Lina heard him, and that Gerhard allowed himself to be passively led away, he ran quickly to the other side of the scaffold, and there blustered and shouted to such a degree, that the crowd was under the impression that the executioner was in his clutches, and they began to press impetuously round him; thus giving Gerhard and Lina the opportunity to pursue their way free and undisturbed. Franz meanwhile shouted like one possessed :

“Slay him,—kill him ! Here is the man-torturer,—we will hang him !” Every one now pressed towards the fatal instrument ; in spite of the resistance of the officers of justice, the condemned was liberated : and now they sought eagerly for the executioner.

One among the crowd had remarked that Franz had thrown his hat and cloak over a stranger, and that the latter had suddenly disappeared, leaning upon the arm of a young girl, in the direction of the wood : as the executioner was not to be found, he concluded that he must be the fugitive, and hurried furiously after the two. He at length saw them disappear behind a thicket ; uttering an imprecation of joy and ferocity, he rushed after them, tore off Gerhard's cloak, and—there gleamed the red garb of the headsman. An iron-bound staff whizzed through the air, and Gerhard fell ; not content with this, the furious wretch would fain have expended his rage still further upon the unfortunate man ; but Lina threw herself with the force of despair upon him, and held him so tightly grasped, that he could not stir a limb, and could only vent his fury in curses and imprecations. So loud was the tumult of the populace round the scaffold, that luckily the sound of this scuffle could not reach them. Lina, however, could not hold out long against her adversary—her strength was failing every minute, and the only consolation which seemed left her

was to breathe out her last sigh upon the dead body of her beloved. Rapid steps were already approaching the spot—already she gave herself up for lost: but, no! it was Franz that was hurrying onward. One glance at Gerhard told him clearly enough what had happened; with one bound he stood beside his sister, grasped with powerful hand her assailant, and threw him to the ground, seized him by the legs, and dragged him away, while he hurriedly said to Lina—

“Hide Gerhard in the underwood! if he still lives, he is saved—quick, quick!”

And he hurried swift as an arrow with the other in the direction of the scaffold, shouting incessantly—

“Victory, here is the caitiff!”

“Kill him! kill him!” replied the multitude. In an instant the scaffold was deserted, and all surrounded Franz, exclaiming:

“The executioner! the headsman!”

And a hundred blows from sticks, stones, and knives, were levelled at the shrieking wretch, who must needs be the executioner this time, and whom it was the less easy to recognise because the impending darkness and madness blinded the eyes of all, and the cry for blood stifled every word. He lived but a few moments, his clothes were scattered in a thousand fragments, and his body could no longer be recognised.

Franz left the crowd at their work of vengeance, and hurried again to his sister, who was kneeling beside Gerhard, and imploring mercy from Heaven in his behalf. A rapid examination told the brave Franz that life still remained in that motionless body; he ran to a neighbouring well, and speedily returned with his hat filled with water, which he began to sprinkle on Gerhard's face and breast. Slowly the latter came to himself. His first sensation was the fervent pressure of Lina's lips; the first thing that met his gaze was her beaming eyes overflowing with tears of joy.

So soon as he had regained his faculties, they quitted the spot, and returned with the utmost caution to the town, where Gerhard remained concealed in Lina's abode

until the clock of Our Lady's church sounded forth midnight. He then proceeded, accompanied by Franz, to the lonely house of the headsman.

The old man, who had been told of all that had happened at the place of execution, was still bewailing, on his sick-bed, the supposed loss of his son, when the door was opened and Gerhard rushed into his arms. Thereupon he rubbed his eyes, questioned, wept, prayed, entreated for some assurance of the truth ; for it appeared to him only a beautiful dream ; but Gerhard kissed him so cordially and so frequently, and pressed him so earnestly to his breast, that the happy father at length became convinced, and then thought he should die of joy.

"O my son ! my son !" he cried at length, "how have you been blessed ! not only saved from death, but from shame also ! The curse which weighed upon us ends only with death, and——You have died !"

"And have shed no blood !" interrupted Gerhard, with rapture.

"Live, then, far away from here," continued the old man ; "quit Antwerp ; take Lina with you ; love her evermore and truly, and may Heaven bless you ! Your children will not be called executioners ; you will not have to weep over them as I have wept over you. My father's savings and my own will keep you from poverty ; employ them to good purpose, and be happy."

Slowly the old man's voice died away ; emotion and joy had quite overcome him. Gerhard's gratitude knew no bounds ; words failed him, but not tears.

Gerhard, the headsman's son, lived long afterwards in Brussels, under another name, united in true love with his Lina ; and when he saw his last hour approach, a numerous and affectionate family crowded round his couch, and amid the murmur of their prayers he calmly sank to rest.



The Crusade of the Netherlands.

It was a bright morning in the month of June, 1217. Two men, with the fair complexion of northern lands, were seated at the mouth of the Tagus, under the burning sun of Portugal, with their eyes fixed on the vast expanse of the ocean, apparently looking for something in the distant horizon. One of these men was an armourer, from Liège; the other a fisherman, a Zealander, from the isle of Walcheren. Fourteen years before, they had enrolled themselves among the followers of Count Baldwin of Hainault, on his way to Constantinople; but their ship had been separated by a storm from the rest of the fleet, and had been wrecked off the coast of Portugal. They had been received with generous hospitality by their countrymen at Lisbon, established themselves in business, and both married.

"There are still no signs of their arrival," said the armourer; "these delays wear me out. I feel as if I were in a vice."

"Let us spin off a few fathoms of patience," said the fisherman; "remember, an army is not swept off by a drag-net."

"Were you not sure that our friends would arrive in the month of June?"

"Well, and the month of June is not yet past?"

"Ah, you people take things coolly; as for me, I am between the anvil and the hammer. The Moors will soon be here to demand their execrable tribute."

"They will not come, however, for ten days yet, Hubert; so we have eight, at least, to ourselves; these rascals are punctual."

"We are fools, however, for having stopped in such a country."

"I am precisely of your mind. Besides, I have now a little vessel, and in a week, if our comrades do not appear,

I will not wait for the king of Morocco ; I will embark with my wife and my daughters, and return to Zealand, and bid farewell to this burning climate. I shall be delighted to meet with the fresh air and homely food of my native land."

"I would willingly go with you, John," said the armourer, "if my young sister-in-law would accompany us, or if my weak-minded brother was arrived, for whom I intend her. This country is really too dangerous."

"Indeed," rejoined the Zealander, "Portugal is not safe. It received, however, a valuable piece of assistance from our countrymen some seventy years ago. In 1147, the Moors were still masters of Lisbon, and Count Alphonso, who had been proclaimed king of Portugal, was besieging that city. After several months spent in vain attempts, he was losing courage, and Portugal was on the point of ceasing to be Christian, when a fleet of Crusaders, who had set forth at the preaching of the blessed Saint Bernard, happily put in here. As soon as Alphonso heard that the Christian banners floated at the mouth of the Tagus, he hastened to the Crusaders. 'You are seeking the Saracens,' said he ; 'here they are ; help us to free a land, which has received the faith of the Lord, from the power of the infidel, and your valour shall be rewarded by rich possessions.'

"These Crusaders were from France, Flanders, Zealand, Liège, Brabant, Friesland, and Holland. Arnulph of Aerschot, who commanded them, did not hesitate to join his gallant troops with those of Alphonso, and at the end of four months Lisbon was taken, the Moorish garrison destroyed, and the whole of the country evacuated by the infidels. A part of our countrymen remained, and established themselves on the estates offered them by King Alphonso ; and we have been fortunate in finding their descendants here. As long as Alphonso lived, he behaved nobly, and the sword was not allowed to rust. But his successor, Sancho, was afraid of the Moors ; he opposed them with gold instead of steel ; and what was most detestable, he consented to pay annually to the king of Morocco a tribute of one hundred Christian slaves."—

Here the armourer crossed himself, and added : " Alphonso II., during the six years that he has worn the crown, has done all in his power to free himself from this shameful compact, but without success."

" But I tell you, Hubert, our friends will come. William of Holland will be true to the call of the Sovereign Pontiff, who does not speak to our good country in vain. In all the brilliant exploits hitherto performed by the Crusaders, the children of the Netherlands have borne a part. Besides, it is not the first time that William has been in Palestine ; the good Count Florence III., his father, died there, and is buried at Antioch ; and he was accompanied by his son."

The Ligger here interrupted his friend, and, pointing towards the sea with his right hand, cried out, " A sail in sight !"

" A sail !" replied the fisherman ; " if I do not mistake, there are two, and they are moving rapidly."

After looking attentively for a few minutes, the fisherman started, and exclaimed, " It is a Christian vessel pursued by a Moorish corsair !"

His sight had not deceived him ; it was indeed a vessel from Friesland. The Moorish ship which pursued it was, to all appearance, larger and better armed ; and though the Frieslanders defended themselves courageously, the Saracens had succeeded at last in grappling with the little vessel and boarding her. Our two spectators, unable to give any other succour to their brethren, fell on their knees and prayed. They followed all the movements of the battle with their eyes, and the emotions of their hearts accompanied every stage of the obstinate conflict. Four men had flung themselves from the Friesland ship into the sea, and disappeared. A body of Saracens were then seen to leap on board the Netherlands vessel, but were immediately driven back by a man of gigantic stature, who marched up and down the deck brandishing in his hand an enormous flail. The fisherman now perceived that the Frieslanders were throwing out ropes, and presently he saw the four seamen, whose disappearance he had not been able to account for, remount the deck. A

vigorous blow of the axe then cut the rope which held the Christian ship, and the Frieslanders floated free. The corsair now appeared to move heavily in its course, and to be disabled from pursuing the chase; in a few minutes it was seen to be sinking, and at last it was suddenly engulfed, with a tremendous noise.

"They are saved!" exclaimed the Lièger, joyfully.

"And do you not see the stratagem of the four men?" said the Zealander; "it was an excellent scheme."

It was, in fact, a custom among the Netherlands navy, for divers to throw themselves into the sea at the beginning of an engagement, and, approaching the enemy's ships under water, to pierce them with holes by means of boring-irons, a manœuvre which generally succeeded in sinking them. The Friesland ship rapidly approached. As soon as it was within hail, the Zealander, through a speaking-trumpet, cried out in his native language, "Hurrah for the Cross!"

A boat was then sent off from the ship to take on board the two men, who, with very little trouble, piloted the ship into Lisbon.

Meantime the fisherman's wife had been anxiously expecting the return of her husband, and was continually going to the door of her cottage on the banks of the Tagus, watching for his appearance. At last she saw him, surrounded by a number of fair-haired men, and at their head a colossal man, armed with a pole, at the end of which swung a tremendous flail. The troop divided itself; the greater number went with the armourer, who, pleased at the arrival of his brother, lodged them in his own house, and in those of his friends. Four only, amongst whom was the giant, took up their abode at the house of the fisherman. The giant, as we have called him, well deserved the name, on account of his uncommon stature and strength. He was more than six feet high, handsome and well-proportioned, with an open and frank countenance, which, under a profusion of flaxen locks, displayed a pair of large clear eyes, rows of splendid teeth, and a fresh and rosy complexion. His age might be twenty-four or twenty-five years. His comrades distin-

guished him by the name of "the Frieslander with the flail," on account of his peculiar weapon, and because, on receiving the cross on the shoulder of his doublet, he had made a vow never to take it off until he had slain twelve Saracens with his flail.

The Frieslander, on entering the fisherman's house, set his flail against the wall, and soon made himself at home with his host and his six daughters. After partaking of a hearty meal, in which he showed that his teeth could do execution as well as his flail, he began to join in the conversation.

"I told you," said he, "that we were coming, so there need be no more alarm; and these young folks whom you have here will not have to be delivered up to his Moorish majesty."

"Indeed I am quite re-assured," said the fisherman; "and Hubert the armourer, too, will be no longer anxious about his sister-in-law. But you have been delayed a long time."

"People cannot always do things as soon as they wish, my good fellow. When the king of Portugal asked the aid of Count William, at the same time that Pope Innocent III. was preaching the crusade, not only against the infidels of Palestine, but against those of Sicily, Spain, and Portugal, every one amongst us bought arms, and even children volunteered to take the cross. But before quitting his states, William had many things to do, in order to secure peace during his absence; however, we are at last here in great numbers, and the bishop of Utrecht himself accompanies us."

The fisherman and his guests now repaired to the port, where shouts of joy, and the ringing of the bells of all the churches of Lisbon, announced the arrival of the Crusaders. All the Netherlands ships were in the harbour, and Count William, who had induced the bishop of Utrecht to accompany him in the holy war, was making a triumphal entry with the courageous prelate. King Alphonso, who had hastened to the shore, wished to be the first to offer his hand to William and to the other chiefs, whom he regarded as his deliverers. He mounted the count and the

bishop on two superb horses, and conducted them with great ceremony to his palace, where a sumptuous banquet was served up. The whole city learnt with joy that the Crusaders had beaten the Moors, and every house was glad to receive some of these brave men who had come to the help of Portugal.

The armourer had received twelve of the Crusaders at his house : one of these was his brother Lambert, whom he was particularly pleased at having found among the defenders of the Cross. He was an armourer like himself, and Hubert's wish was to connect him with his own family by a double tie ; first by taking him as a partner in his business, and then by marrying him to his wife's sister.

It is always injudicious to draw too flattering a portrait beforehand of an intended husband, and it so happened that the sleepy air of the newly arrived Lièger did not at all please the fair Rosalie. Of all those beautiful complexions of the north which had been so extolled to the Lisbonian damsel, one only attracted her notice : it was the frank and manly countenance of the tall Frieslander ; although the custom which he had of always carrying his flail with him, even when visiting his friends in the city, caused her considerable amusement. The second time that he came to her brother-in-law's house she could not refrain from speaking to him ; she asked him how he could wield so heavy a weapon as that enormous flail.

"Oh, senora," said he, "it is very easy ; but if the Moors had such heads as yours, I am sure that my flail would not break many of them."

This natural and involuntary piece of gallantry was not displeasing to the maiden, and the Frieslander, on his part, was far from being unmoved by the beauty and amiable manners of his companion.

The sixth day of the residence of Count William and his army in Lisbon brought the festivities to an end. The Moors, it was said, were landing in immense numbers, and were coming to demand their tribute. Their army was said to be fifty thousand strong ; while the Crusaders commanded by William were not above eight

thousand in number. Nevertheless the count advised that the enemy should be allowed to land their troops, and at the same time he directed the admiral of the Crusaders' fleet to be in readiness to set sail and to cut off the retreat of the infidels.

Next morning, all the soldiers of the Cross having attended divine service and confessed, quitted the town to march towards the enemy. As they passed, the priests and monks blessed them in the name of the Lord ; and they went on courageously, determined to die or to gain a victory in the cause of God. The infidel army marshalled itself proudly, and so fierce was the onset, that the Netherlanders and Portuguese soon found themselves surrounded on all sides. The Christians, however, were not dismayed ; they fought like heroes, and a thousand feats of valour were performed. Among the Frieslanders, our hero of the flail was conspicuous ; occupied valiantly in the performance of his vow, he kept the ground round him clear, and received no wound.

The count had determined to effect an opening through the enemy's ranks on the side of the port, so as to support himself by his fleet, and at the same time to hinder the retreat of the Saracens. Throwing himself into the midst of the enemy, he was so hotly attacked that his horse fell under him. He was on the point of being slain, as well as the bishop of Utrecht, who had just been taken, and the Christian army was thus about to lose its two chiefs, when the Frieslander with the flail, who could see over his prince's head, rushed to his aid, and dealing his tremendous blows right and left, cleared away the Moors who were nearest to him. He then raised the count on the dead bodies, while at the same time King Alphonso rescued the prelate from the hands of the enemy.

William now pursued his plan with redoubled vigour ; pierced the enemy's columns, and drew up his troops before the harbour. The battle raged for four hours. At last victory declared for the Christians. The Saracens, completely routed, fled to their ships, leaving behind them fourteen thousand dead and six thousand

prisoners, amongst whom were two of their chiefs. A great number of fugitives were drowned ; many were overtaken by the Netherlands vessels and perished, and by the evening the city, the country, and the coasts were entirely free. The re-entry of William into Lisbon was a second triumph, more joyful even than the first. The people on their knees uttered songs of joy, and blessed the soldiers as they passed ; while the clergy of Lisbon came to meet the conquerors in festive procession, with palms in their hands, and loud canticles of praise.

After they had given thanks to the Most High before His altars, the chiefs repaired to the palace. The two Moorish princes were allowed to ransom themselves, and they swore to pay henceforth the tribute of money which they had hitherto exacted from the Portuguese. The prisoners were to be kept in captivity until the king of Morocco should send back twelve hundred Christians, who were still captives in his kingdom ; and it was agreed that two Saracens should be restored for each Christian.

During the renewed festivities which celebrated the happy deliverance of Portugal, the Frieslander with the flail again saw the sister-in-law of the armourer. The deeds of the gigantic warrior were generally talked of, and Rosalie ventured to ask him if he was free from his vow. There was a peculiar interest in her question, and something remarkable also in her manner of putting it.

"Senora," replied he, "everybody tells me that I have been of some use ; but, for my own part, I have not been able to reckon more than eleven Moors that I have despatched."

"But you are forgetting those on board the ship the day you arrived."

"Ah, you have heard of that encounter, senora," said he, smiling ; "but as for those, I do not know what I may have done, and they ought not to be counted. I must have one more battle."

"And so you are going away ?" said the maiden.

There was an expression of emotion in these words

which moved the heart of the Frieslander, though he could hardly explain his feelings to himself.

“Senora,” replied he, sighing, “I could not kill an unarmed Saracen, and there are no others here ; and then I have been happy enough to rescue my prince in this engagement : I shall no doubt find other opportunities of making myself useful to him.”

With these words the Frieslander took up his flail, and left the house with a downcast countenance : the next day he did not venture to revisit the abode of Rosalie.

Count William was now impatient to embark for the Holy Land. Suddenly tearing himself away from the festivities, he took advantage of a favourable wind to give orders for departure ; and the Christian fleet, amidst the prayers and blessings of the people, was seen steering its course towards the shores of Palestine. Our hero often turned to look back at the coast of Lisbon ; and when he had lost sight of the shores of Portugal, his first care was to inquire whether the brother of the armoured, for whom the beautiful Rosalie was destined, had re-embarked with the Christians. He was grieved, though he scarcely dared to ask himself why, to learn that he had remained behind at Lisbon.

After a favourable voyage, the Netherlands fleet arrived on the shores of Egypt, and when William had joined his forces with those of the other Christian princes, it was resolved to besiege Damietta. This town, situated at the second mouth of the Nile, had, towards the river, a double rampart, and, on the land side, a triple circle of bastions ; while an enormous tower, placed in the middle of the Nile, held in check any hostile ship which might attempt to approach. In addition to this, a solid iron chain was stretched across from the tower to the town, which effectually closed the passage of the river.

The Crusaders, pitching their tents in the beautiful country in the neighbourhood of Damietta, blockaded the town on the landward side, and at the same time began the siege on the side of the river. After this, having erected galleries on their ships, with drawbridges and ladders, they approached the ramparts, and commenced a

tremendous assault. Great and valiant exploits were also performed by the besieged, and the infidels defended themselves so gallantly, that the first Christians who endeavoured to scale the walls were thrown back into the Nile, and drowned. The knights, thus repulsed, held a council of war. They saw that all the fine weather had been consumed in plans, the inefficiency of which was now apparent; and it was determined that, during the winter they should content themselves with blockading the river; and that from time to time each portion of the army should attempt the assault. It was evident that the first thing was to break the great chain which stretched from the town to the tower; and after due deliberation, the men of Haarlem were selected by Count William for this enterprise. These warriors adopted the plan of arming their vessels with an immense steel saw, made on purpose; and the first time the wind was favourable, they fell with all their weight upon the chain, which gave way under their efforts, and snapped asunder. The Crusaders' ships had now the command of the river; and, in memory of this gallant exploit, the emperor allowed the citizens of Haarlem to bear in their escutcheon the imperial sword surmounted by a cross, in addition to the stars, which had hitherto been their only device.

The spring of 1218 had arrived, without any important result having been obtained. The warriors of the Netherlands then managed to construct, by means of two ships lashed together, a great wooden castle, equal in height to the lofty tower which stood in the middle of the river. On the top of this heavy floating fortress was fixed a drawbridge, carrying a covered gallery, which was intended to be let down upon the enemy's tower. On the 24th of August this enormous machine descended the river, manned by a chosen band of soldiers from the Netherlands Crusaders, and from the army of the duke of Austria, who occupied all the stories of this moveable fort. The sailors who steered it stopped boldly before the infidels' tower, and fixed grappling-irons in the lower loopholes of the walls. A fearful struggle now began.

Christians hurled upon the enemy a cloud of javelins and stones, while the Saracens, standing in a compact body on their ramparts, showered down upon the moving tower burning darts and Greek fire. Soon the huge machine was in flames, and the Crusaders were obliged to retreat, raising the drawbridge, after having lost the banner of the duke of Austria. At this fearful moment the whole army, who stood on the bank of the river, fell instinctively on their knees, and each one, from the king and prince down to the humblest soldier, began to beat his breast, and to send up his prayers to Heaven. The patriarch of Jerusalem, the bishop of Utrecht, and all the priests and monks of the army, lifted up their hands in supplication; and suddenly (as the chronicles tell us) the Greek fire was, as if by a miracle, extinguished; the machine reappeared untouched, as if the fire had not reached it; the drawbridge fell again on to the tower of the Saracens; and the Crusaders, regaining their courage, rushed furiously onward, brandishing their pikes, maces, and battle-axes.

Amongst the first of those who set foot on the battlements of the tower, historians mention a young man of gigantic stature, who, armed with a heavy flail, did immense execution among the infidels; at one time dashing out their brains at a blow; at another, crushing them to death in their armour. This was no other than our hero, the Friclander. On reaching the tower, he seized the yellow standard of the sultan. "Here is a banner," he exclaimed; "it will make up for the one we have lost." So saying, he cleared a way with his flail for his companions who were coming up behind him. Soon, however, he found himself hemmed into a corner by a group of the enemy, who were trying to surround him. He perceived that he was alone, and that the Christians were again on the point of being driven back. A bold Lièger was at this moment struggling with one foot on the drawbridge and the other on the platform of the tower, and was fighting face to face with a powerful Saracen. He did not observe that a party of Moors, who had retreated into a lower story, were seizing the Crusaders with

hooks from behind, and hurling them into the river ; and that, whilst he was fighting, a Moor had stooped down and cut with his axe the frail beam on which he was standing. All at once he felt the narrow plank crack under his feet, and, unwilling to die without doing some service, he seized his adversary by the leg, and dragging him with him in his fall, both disappeared in the depths of the river. At the same moment our Frieslander, having disengaged himself, and leaping over the bodies of the Saracens which were strewn on the ground, returned to the foot of the drawbridge, from which by this time the Moors had disappeared. The bridge was repaired, and the Christians, hurrying over it, became masters of the tower. The lower stories were evacuated by the infidels, who, betaking themselves to swimming, were either drowned or taken prisoners.

A few more words on the subsequent history of the Crusade may not be out of place. The sultan of Cairo now offered peace ; but his proposals were declined, contrary, however, to the advice of Count William and the entreaties of John de Brienne, king of Jerusalem, who was in the camp with the other crusading princes, his capital being then in the power of the infidels. By accepting peace, the Christian prisoners would have been delivered ; and the sultan, moreover, had offered to put the Crusaders in possession of the Holy City. The majority of the Crusaders, however, doubted his sincerity, and wished besides to be under no obligation, except to their own arms ; some even declared that, far from accepting the sultan as an ally, they would endeavour to annex Egypt to the kingdom of Jerusalem. The siege of Damietta was therefore continued ; and although that unhappy town, so closely blockaded, was ravaged by a frightful famine, it held out longer than had been expected. It was not until one dark night in November, 1219, that the last assault was made. The scaling-ladders were planted in the midst of the noise caused by a violent storm, and the Crusaders mounted them, astonished at meeting with no resistance. The town, in fact, was no longer inhabited but by dead bodies, which were left lying in the streets !

Of seventy thousand inhabitants, which Damietta contained at the commencement of the siege, only three thousand remained, whom famine had made more like spectres than men.

After the siege of Damietta, Count William returned to Europe, having been summoned back to his states : our hero, loaded with well-earned distinction, returned with him. William did not forget that he owed his life more than once to him, and he had promised to grant him any favour in his power.

"I will only ask for one," said the Frieslander, "and that is, when we come near the coast of Portugal, that I may be set down for one day at Lisbon."

The heart of the hero, in truth, had not forgotten Rosalie in the midst of all these terrible events : he had now more than performed his vow, and he wished to see her again and to tell her so. He sometimes fancied, with bitterness of heart, that she might be married ; at other times, he buoyed himself up with the hope that she had not hearkened to the suit of the armourer's brother. The count granted at once the request of the valiant Frieslander ; nor in truth was he sorry himself to see once more the city which he had formerly preserved. He was received by King Alphonso and his people with as much gratitude as on the day after the defeat of the Moors ; and his fleet was furnished with abundance of fresh provisions.

The Frieslander hastened to the armourer's house. The first person whom he met at the door was Rosalie, who blushed as she approached to greet him. He could not conceal his joy at hearing that she was still free, and that the Lièger had been formally dismissed. Seeing him remain at Lisbon, instead of following his vow for the Holy War, the high-minded Portuguese maiden had despised him ; and all the efforts of her brother-in-law and sister had not been able to alter her resolution. When the Frieslander had related the accounts of the battles which had been fought, and of the death of the brave fellow from Liège, who had dragged the Saracen

down with him into the river, Rosalie, thinking of him who had been proposed as her husband, said,—

“Ah! and it was one of his townsmen! If *he* had done this, and had fought by the side of heroes, I would have consented to become his wife.”

“But I,” said the Frieslander, “have now accomplished my vow.” Then, with a blushing countenance, he began to stammer out some words with a voice full of emotion and a trembling heart, when the two brothers from Liège interrupted him, by asking him to come in.

After a short stay at Lisbon, the Netherlands fleet set sail; and the Frieslander with the flail, along with the fisherman of the island of Walcheren, his wife, and six children, embarked with it. When they arrived at their native land, the relations of the Frieslander, who had come to welcome him, saw a beautiful stranger advance by his side: it was Rosalie, who had not hesitated to leave her native country to unite her fortunes with those of her valiant husband.



The Two Combats.

I.

A WOMAN IN THE LISTS.

WHEN Charles the Bold had confiscated the liberties of the city of Liège, which he almost destroyed in 1468, as a chastisement for its rebellion, and had caused the inhabitants to submit to authorities which had no other law than the will of the monarch; after he had intimidated, by his stern justice, Tongres, Saint Trond, and all the towns which were on terms of friendship with the intractable city, the Liègeois, whom it was impossible to deprive of the native pride and independence which they had inherited from their forefathers, held in aversion a prince who, from their sovereign, had, in their eyes, become their tyrant. His reign, therefore, was one of constant turbulence, and the discontented city was the scene of successive riots, insurrections, and bloodshed. Rebels were continually put to death, without the spirit of rebellion being eradicated. To increase these miseries, there were, as one always sees, leaders ready to enrich themselves by these public dissensions; disappearing whenever their object was attained, and leaving the multitude to bear the weight of the prince's vengeance. It was then that Guillaume de la Marck, who became so famous under the name of the "Boar of Ardennes," commenced those conspiracies which in after-years placed his son on the throne of the princes of Liège.

In 1473 there was a plot formed by him, though without his appearing to move in it, the result of which was great bloodshed. A small troop of thirty men, commanded by Hubert Coppins, a brave Liègeois, who believed himself destined to be the saviour of his country, organized a resistance against the archers of the

duke of Burgundy. Driven up against a quay of the river Meuse, the little troop defended itself gallantly, knowing well that they could not expect any mercy: there remained at last only eight men alive, when Hubert received a wound in the throat from one of the men-at-arms, who after having struck him down, threw him into the Meuse. The other seven, discouraged by this event, surrendered themselves, and were all executed in the Great Market-place. Sentence was also pronounced against the dead; their houses were destroyed, their goods seized, and themselves burnt in effigy.

Hubert Coppins, and his brother Sylvester, were the only remaining branches of an ancient family, who followed the trade of armourers. The two brothers, who were tenderly attached to each other, had married at Brussels two sisters, Gertrude and Beggha. Sylvester, unable any longer to witness the unhappy condition of his native city, had established himself at Brussels with his wife Gertrude, inhabiting a small house, in a street since called Rue d'Argent. Hubert, without blaming his brother's decision, refused to quit Liège, hoping, as we have seen, to contribute towards the recovery of its liberties. Notwithstanding the troubles occasioned by the tyranny of Charles the Bold, he at least enjoyed at home that domestic happiness which an excellent wife is sure to shed around her.

Beggha was twenty-eight years old when, by the death of her husband, as above related, the ruin of her house, and the confiscation of her property, she found herself without resources, or even a home, in the city of Liège; she therefore repaired to Brussels, travelling on foot, and taking with her her only child, a little girl in her third year. Here she was gladly welcomed by her brother-in-law Sylvester, who hired a small house for her near his own, and promised never to abandon her. Following a custom, of which there are many examples in those times, Sylvester conducted Beggha, as the widow of a victim to his country's wrongs, whose remains were still unburied, to the church of the Petits Frères (now the church of the Augustins), and there made her solemnly vow, at the

foot of the altar, that she would never marry again ; and that when her daughter was grown up and provided for, she herself would retire to the Béguinage, under the protection of her patroness Saint Beggha.

The young widow vowed obedience on the sacred relics, and Sylvester, in his turn, took an oath to support and clothe his sister-in-law and her child, for the love he bore his deceased brother, until they were able to do without his assistance. Having caused a requiem to be performed for the repose of Hubert's soul, he began to work with greater assiduity and perseverance than ever at his trade, in order to be able to perform his promise to his brother's widow ; and very soon he found himself in a position of competence, if not of affluence.

Beggha meanwhile lived in quiet retirement, occupied in embroidery, and in educating her young child, seeing only her brother-in-law and Gertrude, and going every evening to pray at the Béguinage. She took no interest in any of the news which was talked of at Brussels, except what related to the city of Liège, and that name she never heard mentioned without a shudder. One day it was announced that a Liègeois rebel, condemned to death by the council of justice of that city, and who, after escaping to Brussels, had been retaken by the archers of the duke of Burgundy, was to be executed at the "Grand Sablon." At this intelligence the unfortunate Beggha became almost frantic, and to the astonishment of every one, ran with the utmost eagerness to witness the horrible spectacle. She returned, however, much calmer than she went, though nearly prostrate from bodily suffering ; and it was evident that some mysterious load had been removed from her breast.

Three years passed away, during which time Beggha never failed a single evening in going to visit the Béguinage. At last her nightly absences became so prolonged as to give rise to censorious remarks. It was reported, in fact, that the austere widow had secretly re-married, and thus had falsified the oaths taken before the altar. In confirmation of this suspicion, it was affirmed that she had repeatedly been seen entering

a house of mean appearance, in the neighbourhood of the Béguinage, where she could not possibly have had any business to transact. Suspicions and slanderous reports multiplied to such an extent, that at last Sylvester himself became impressed by them ; so much so, that he said one day to the unfortunate widow, " Beggha, you have forfeited your honour."

"God is my witness," answered she, in a supplicating tone, "that I have never deceived you."

"Beggha," he cried, "it is false ! and your violated oath releases me from mine."

With these words he pushed her from him, left the house, and forbade his wife ever to see her sister again.

The unfortunate Beggha wept bitterly ; but notwithstanding all his reproaches, she still continued to repair every evening to the Béguinage.

Sylvester, thus really believing himself dishonoured by his brother's widow, demanded public justice, and upon the information which he gave, it was resolved that the ordeal of the judgment of God should be resorted to.

An actual combat between a man and a woman was, as it may be supposed, an unusual occurrence, for generally some one could be found to take the place of the latter. If she was rich, she would engage a champion to do battle for her ; if she were betrothed, her lover would enter the lists, with his lady's gage on the point of his lance ; and even in other cases it was common enough for a champion to come forward and take the place of the weaker sex.

The poor friendless Beggha, however, had no one to espouse her cause, and was therefore obliged to accept the duel with her brother-in-law in her own person.

The circumstances of this ordeal were so extraordinary, that great numbers came from all parts to witness it. A circular hole two feet and a half in depth, and four feet in diameter, was dug in the street of the "Fosse-aux-Loups," opposite to the entrance of the church of "Les Petits Frères." A path four feet broad encompassed this hole, surrounded on the other side by strong barriers. For his place of combat the man had the hole, and the woman was allowed the narrow road outside, but no farther.

After the two combatants had each sworn that their cause was good and just, they were conducted to the place of ordeal. The laws were then read aloud, which condemned the man, if vanquished, to be beheaded ; and the woman, if she failed, to be buried alive. They entered the lists, which were closed upon them, and one of the judges gave the arms appointed to be used in the combat. These were for both man and woman, three large sticks about a yard long. The woman's only were armed with a strap, to which was attached a stone of a pound in weight. The custom was, that if, in endeavouring to strike the woman, the man missed his mark, and struck the earth instead, he was to lose one of his sticks. It was the same also for the woman, if, in seeking to give a blow, she should miss her aim. Whichever of the two happened first to lose three sticks was considered guilty, and sentenced accordingly.

Beggha, who was horrified at the thought of killing her husband's brother, but still was obliged to defend herself, made no use of her sticks and large stones, but only studied how to avoid being struck. Sylvester began the combat furiously, imagining he was fulfilling a sacred duty ; but he lost his three sticks, without having once struck Beggha, though the combat had lasted a whole hour. The unfortunate man was then ordered to be led to the scaffold, while Beggha meanwhile earnestly entreated his pardon. At this moment the crowd opened, and made room for an old monk, who was recognised as Beggha's confessor at the Béguinage, leading with him a man whose appearance caused Sylvester to utter a loud and agonizing cry. He had recognised in this man his long-lost brother Hubert !

After the first moment of surprise, Hubert related how he had been rescued alive from the waters of the Meuse, and cured of his wounds by the charitable kindness of a poor collier, who for a long time concealed him in a mine ; and that at last, having rejoined his wife in Brussels, she had piously supported him in secret, for years, in an obscure house attached to the Béguinage. The good old monk, who alone was aware of this retreat, hastened to assure Beggha of her husband's safety, by telling her that

he had just heard of the death of Charles the Bold, and the accession of his daughter Mary of Burgundy, who (herself a native of Brussels) had, as the first act of her reign, accorded a general pardon throughout her dominions.

Sylvester, once more set at liberty, supped that evening seated between his brother and sister-in-law. Hubert could hardly tire of embracing his little daughter, whom he had not seen for four years ; and each rendered thanks to God for the result of His judgment, acknowledging that it was right to consider twice before believing evil of honest hearts.

II.

THE COMBAT OF THE PEASANTS.

IN the year 1429, Philip, count of Flanders, surnamed "the Good," espoused the Infanta Isabella of Portugal. Philip was at this time thirty-three years of age, and was sovereign of the greater part of the Low Countries, but had not yet succeeded to the dukedom of Brabant, to which he was entitled by right of inheritance. In honour of his future bride, he established the order of the Golden Fleece, which took place during the festivities with which his marriage was celebrated.

Having come with his court from Bruges to Brussels for the feast of Christmas, 1429, he had occasion to send a letter secretly to Termonde, on the twenty-sixth of December, but would not trust, as hitherto, Master Colin Boute, his *chef-de-police*, nor yet Humbert Coustain, his *valet-de-chambre*, but determined to send it by one Guillemin Fyot, a jovial hunchback, who was considered to fill the office of village fool, but who, on an emergency, could act as scribe, arrange processes, draw out deeds, settle love affairs, &c. &c. : a little man who was always merry, pleased everybody, and who had on many occasions furnished amusement to the duke himself. Fyot had three sons, for whom he had a great affection, and who were named Laurent, Paul, and G ry : the eldest was

twenty-eight, the youngest nineteen years of age. We mention these things for the sake of the sequel.

Philip then, having summoned Guillemín privately to his presence, confided to his care the important mission alluded to, which the hunchback promised to execute with all diligence and care.

"If your highness will give me a good horse," said he, "I shall arrive this evening at Termonde, and will bring back the answer to-morrow."

The duke immediately called Jacot de Roussay, one of the twenty-four gentlemen archers of his guard, and ordered him to saddle one of his best horses for Guillemín. He then placed a purse in the hand of the hunchback, who, before a quarter of an hour had elapsed, was already far from Brussels.

But gaiety and wit often make enemies ; and Guillemín unfortunately had one—a serjeant or bailiff, named Nicolas, who gained his living by getting up prosecutions, and by encouraging disputes, which he did with as much ardour as the hunchback displayed in endeavouring, to the great displeasure of the other, to allay them. Guillemín had, unfortunately, more than once made a jest of the serjeant, who was an ill-looking fellow, with a square, bony figure, and grey eyes almost hidden under a pair of bushy eyebrows. The latter swore to be revenged ; but not venturing to do anything publicly, for fear of the justice of Philip, he waited for some secret opportunity of carrying out his intention. This opportunity now occurred. As the serjeant was returning from Termonde, passing through a wood, he met the poor hunchback, riding on as fast as he could, on the prince's errand. It was raining in torrents, the roads were deserted, the sky was dark and cloudy, and night was fast approaching. Nicolas, as soon as he recognised his enemy, threw himself across the path, which just at that spot was rather narrow, stopped the horse, and after giving Guillemín a terrific beating, with a thick cudgel, left him half-dead in a neighbouring ditch. Possibly he had not intended to carry his vengeance quite so far. However that may be, he manifested no regret for what he had done ; for after

robbing the poor fellow, he mounted his horse, and continued his journey to Brussels, thinking only what course he should adopt in order to conceal his crime. He did not propose to enter the city with the hunchback's horse, which would in all probability have been the means of betraying him ; and he was considering with himself how he should best dispose of the animal, when all at once he perceived one of the duke's archers at some little distance in front of him. This was Jacot de Roussay, who had been despatched by Philip, about an hour after the departure of his messenger, in order to act as convoy to the hunchback, for whose safety during the journey he had become alarmed. It was not long before the serjeant was face to face with De Roussay, who, recognising Guillemin's horse, stopped him, and asked in a stern voice how he came by that palfrey ?

Nicolas had by this time thought of a stratagem, so he answered boldly that he had just found him on the road.

"Is it not one of the horses of my lord the duke of Burgundy ?" said the archer. "I gave it myself to Guillemin Fyot."

"Guillemin Fyot ! Is not that the hunchback of the Rue de Namur ?" said the serjeant.

"Just so. The duke despatched him this morning on a commission, and I was directed to follow him."

"Some misfortune must have befallen him," replied Nicolas : "he is in the habit of drinking freely, and no doubt left the poor horse at the door of an inn, who, finding himself without his rider, was returning by himself to the town. I even expected to see the fool hereabouts, astride on a wall, whipping and spurring, and thinking himself mounted on his horse."

"That is possible," said Jacot. "However, I must obey my orders, and endeavour to find the hunchback. But you must deliver up the horse."

"Certainly ; that is quite right," said the serjeant, who was glad enough to escape so easily. So, dismounting from the horse, he made the best of his way back to Brussels. Unhappily the archer, not suspecting any

trick, did not search him, or he would soon have discovered the proofs of his crime.

When Jacot arrived at the ditch with his two horses, he perceived the hunchback ; and thinking the man was tipsy, he dismounted, and fastening him on his horse, took him to the house of a surgeon at Termonde, who declared that Guillemin was dead. Jacot, in great alarm, instantly searched the hunchback, and finding that he had been robbed, he at once concluded that he had been assassinated. Mounting his horse, therefore, he returned with all speed to Brussels, and related the fatal adventure to the prince. Philip was greatly irritated ; and having received full authority from his relative, the duke of Brabant, to act in the matter according to his judgment, he immediately set on foot the strictest investigation. Nothing, however, was discovered. The serjeant was interrogated ; but he confined himself to the same answers which had before deceived the archer.

The news of the hunchback's death was soon spread abroad. Everybody was grieved—a thousand conjectures were formed—and the public, less cautious than the judges, openly accused the serjeant of the crime. The three sons of Guillemin did not doubt for a moment that he was guilty, for they were aware of his secret grudge against their father ; and as they well knew that the latter was not in the habit of drinking to excess, they gave no credit to the story of the serjeant. On the following day, therefore, they presented themselves, in mourning habits, before Philip the Good, and demanded justice, formally announcing themselves upon the spot as the accusers of the serjeant. The duke, having told them that he had no certain proofs upon which to act, they proceeded to ask, according to the privilege of the country, for the ordeal by single combat, and all three threw down their gloves. Philip could not refuse them this right ; but, as they were peasants, they were not permitted to fight with swords, but only with staves. The serjeant was then cited to appear, who still maintained his innocence, and accepted the challenge with the utmost effrontery, declaring that he left the result to the

judgment of God. The serjeant, in truth, was vigorous and robust, and relied on his own strength, and the weakness of his three young adversaries.

It was arranged that the three sons of Guillemin should fight one after the other, beginning with the eldest ; and the duel was to take place on the following day, which was the thirtieth of December. In the mean time they put the accusers and the accused in separate prisons, each having a guard of two archers, and a fencer to teach them how to manage their weapons. At the time appointed, the serjeant and his adversaries were conducted to the place of combat, which was a spot called the "Petit Sablon." They were dressed in black polished leather, which fitted close to their bodies, and each had a wicker shield or buckler, about three feet in height, with a strong hazel staff of the same length. Their nails were cut, their feet naked, and their heads shaven and uncovered. All the people in Brussels who were interested in the cause of Guillemin's sons, crowded to witness this spectacle, compassionating them, and uttering prayers for their success.

On leaving the church to which they had repaired previous to the hour of combat, Laurent Fyot, the eldest son, advanced to the lists with his shield and staff ; and making the sign of the cross, swore upon the Holy Evangelists that his quarrel was just. The serjeant approached from the opposite side, similarly armed, and made the same profession. Some ashes were given the combatants to rub on their hands, that they might the better hold their sticks, which, by order of the duke, had not been sharpened. The first magistrate of the town proclaimed aloud, that no one under pain of punishment should give any sign, or utter any exclamation in favour of either of the combatants ; after which he threw down the glove of Laurent Fyot in the lists, saying, "Do your duty !"

The two champions fought furiously, one burning to revenge his father's murder, the other to save his own head. After a quarter of an hour of violent blows given and received, Laurent fell down faint and exhausted, and

was carried away, leaving the serjeant victor. Paul Fyot then succeeded his brother, and he also received so severe a blow on his arm, that he was at once disabled. There now only remained Géry, the youngest and most determined of the three ; but the burly serjeant, far from being exhausted, seemed to increase in courage from his previous successes. The struggle lasted a long time ; their staves were broken, and the two champions endeavoured to throw one another down ; but at length, Nicolas was a third time conqueror. In the midst of the general consternation, the executioner, accompanied by his assistants, hastily constructed three gibbets ; for in these combats, the vanquished, who were thereupon accounted guilty, were condemned to death. The duke, who was present at this fatal duel, was much afflicted at the result. He had no means, however, of preventing it, for the right of combat in many towns was a sacred privilege, nor could the sovereign abolish it, without the consent both of the state and of the people.

While Philip was sorrowfully recounting many fatal instances of this barbarous custom, and expressing to the nobles around him his ardent desire to replace these odious customs by more equitable laws, the serjeant was giving utterance to his triumph, and the executioner and his men were finishing their fatal preparations. The three sons of Guillemín Fyot were just about to suffer, when all at once their father the hunchback, whom everybody believed to be dead, was seen advancing on horseback, accompanied by the duke's messenger. The populace sent up shouts of joy at this sudden appearance ; and Guillemín, who was conducted immediately to the feet of the prince, related the circumstances of his adventure, and his return to consciousness, after having been copiously bled by the surgeon. A button which he had torn from his enemy's coat, during the struggle, was sufficient evidence of the perpetrator of the deed, and the crime having been fully proved, the serjeant was executed. The hunchback was conducted in triumph to his house, accompanied by his three children, who were all cured of their bruises in a few days.

On the morrow, the thirty-first of December, many lords, who, at the time of the combat, had approved the benevolent wishes of Philip, drew up a petition, which was signed by the clergy, nobility, officers of justice, magistrates, and many of the oldest inhabitants of the town, for the suppression of the "duel judiciaire." On new year's day they carried this to Philip the Good, who, surrounded by his court, received them with the greatest kindness.

"You are, indeed, noblemen," he said ; "this is the most precious gift you could have made me, and we must give you something in return. In ten days, my lords, we shall hold at our good town of Bruges, the first chapter of our Order of the Golden Fleece, in honour of our union with the Infanta of Portugal ; and we intend to create you knights of the same. We also desire every one should know, that the possession of good and equitable laws is the most esteemed gift that can be bestowed, both upon princes and their subjects."



The Stilts of Namur.

PRINCES are greatly to be pitied when they are kept in ignorance of the real condition of their subjects. They are told that the people are cheerful and contented, when, perhaps, they are destitute even of the necessities of life ; that the nation rejoices, when it is groaning under suffering ; that their subjects are happy in obeying their commands, while all the time a smouldering fire of discontent is lurking beneath their feet, ready at any moment to burst forth into rebellion. The wife of Louis the Fifteenth, while eating a piece of pie-crust, in the time of a great famine, said innocently, " But if the people have no bread, why do they not give them pie-crust ? " Poor woman ! beyond the narrow circle of her own palace, how little did she know of France ! The following story relating to John, first count of Namur, of the house of Dampierre, is an illustration of a similar kind.

John had married Marie d'Artois, a good princess no doubt in the main, but who had the misfortune to be brought up without knowing anything of her fellow-creatures. The count and his wife lived on the revenues of their domains, and the taxes levied on the towns and different kinds of commerce, dues of toll and barrier, of fairs and markets, of entrance, of navigation on the Sambre, &c. &c. All these resources, notwithstanding the limited extent of each, formed together a considerable yearly capital, which the count of Namur, with the aid of his wife and court, expended in luxury and pleasure, little thinking that they were dissipating in idle amusement what was extorted from the hardly earned pittance of the poor. Whenever they were in want of money, they heedlessly levied, though without any direct intention to oppress,—some new tax : they had been brought up to consider the people as a kind of machine, subservient in all things to their use, and all the trouble they took was

to invent the new impost, to establish it by law, and to sell the right to levy it.

These things occurred at the beginning of the fourteenth century, an epoch of great activity and movement, when the people were everywhere endeavouring to emancipate themselves from their thralldom. John of Namur had accompanied his sovereign, the emperor Henry the Seventh, to Italy, in his expedition against the Guelphs; and Marie d'Artois, who governed the county of Namur during his absence, took the opportunity of imposing new taxes and burdens upon her subjects. The people seemed to bear it patiently enough at first, but a secret spirit of rebellion was gradually gathering, and in the year 1343, while John of Namur was in Paris, occupied in negotiating a treaty between Philippe-le-Bel and the emperor, the storm burst forth. The vessel had been well nigh full, and the establishment of a fresh tax by Marie d'Artois, had become the drop of water which caused it to overflow. Surrounded, moreover, by neighbours, who had resisted the yoke of their rulers, and having before their eyes the example of the people of Brabant, of Liège, and the Flemings, who had just gained their freedom, the inhabitants of Namur were encouraged to rebel; and with this view a tumultuous and discontented crowd collected one morning in the Place Saint Aubain, the market Saint Pierre, and at the Picconette. The murmurs became louder and louder, until groans and cries of vengeance were heard on all sides; and in a few hours the whole town was in open insurrection. The countess was astonished at the discovery that the people had a will different from her own, and endeavoured at first to oppose the torrent by force; but she was reminded that in 1286 (not sixty years before), the people of Namur, oppressed by their sovereign Marie de Brienne, had expelled her from the town, though she was an empress. Marie d'Artois could scarcely credit this recital; the whole thing was quite new to her, and, brought up as she had been, appeared to her, in fact, impossible.

As the people exclaimed against the new tax as burdensome and intolerable, she thought to appease them

by altering it to one somewhat less heavy, and she immediately proceeded to do so ; but it was too late ; the people were thoroughly roused, and would not hear of terms ; they loudly declaimed against the injustice of the countess, who had invented the taxes ; against the collectors, who received them ; and against the privileged persons who were exempt from them. At last, raised to a pitch of insatiated fury, they pursued and maltreated the countess's herald, and finally proceeded to attack the palace. Upon this Marie d'Artois, with her children, fled for safety to the castle ; where, however, she was speedily followed and besieged.

The populace, now masters of the town, formally abolished every law which they deemed hostile to their own interests, chose a new body of magistrates, and organized themselves into a provisionary republic. After the countess had been blockaded for some time in the castle, and reduced to great straits, she began to see that she had been deceiving herself, and determined to propose terms of capitulation. The people, however, now became in their turn haughty and exacting ; they demanded the suppression of all taxes, the re-establishment of certain immunities, a change of magistrates, and their own election of public functionaries. Princes too often imagine that to yield is a weakness, and Mary rejected these propositions with disdain : she was, therefore, more closely besieged than ever, and could only comfort herself by the prospect of deliverance when her husband should arrive from France.

And in fact on the very next day John of Namur appeared before the gates of his capital, which he was astonished to find closed against him. Having at that time neither armies, allies, nor money, he was obliged to dissemble his anger, and to enter into negotiations with the rebels. When he knew, however, on what conditions the people were willing to admit him (which were the same as had before been proposed to his wife), he refused to accept them, and immediately began his preparations for an assault. He first called together those vassals who had remained faithful to him, and collected some men-at-

arms. Machines being needed to make a breach in the walls, the count sent to Huy, a town with which he had always been on good terms, requesting the citizens to lend him their engines and siege-machines. The Hutois, however, answered that, as they valued the friendship of the people of Namur as much as that of the count, they could not interfere in the quarrel, and must therefore decline rendering him any assistance. The count now saw himself in a serious dilemma ; but it was not long before he found the required aid in a petty prince of the country, Arnold, count of Iooz, who speedily arrived with troops, war-engines, arms, and provisions. Namur was blockaded on all sides, and the people who were besieging the princess, suddenly found themselves besieged in their turn ; and while the countess, plentifully supplied with every necessary, was patiently waiting the period of her rescue, they soon found themselves in the utmost straits. All communication with the neighbouring villages was cut off, no provisions could be procured from any quarter, and famine already stared them in the face. Alarmed at the serious aspect of affairs, and seeing no chance of relief, they raised the siege of the castle, and then throwing open the gates of the town to the count, the citizens retired each to his own house, having first decided upon a general meeting on the following morning, in order to discuss the best means of appeasing the count's anger.

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While the chiefs of the insurrection, with many of the principal inhabitants, were assembled for this purpose at the Hôtel de Ville, a herald arrived to announce the solemn entry of the count on the following day. Coming as he did on an errand of vengeance, he forbade the inhabitants to greet his entrance, ordered all the houses to be closed, and commanded that not a single citizen should leave the town, either on foot, on horseback, or in a carriage.

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This ominous message occasioned the utmost consternation among the assembly. "The count," said an old merchant, "is a man who listens to reason ; it will be best to tell him from our own mouths what it is that we

want ; all will be lost if we are not allowed to speak to him ; for the nobles who surround the prince will certainly persuade him to adopt the severest measures."

“ Our best plan is to brave his commands,” said a master coppersmith ; “ let a deputation go to him in the camp, and request an audience.”

“ We shall only irritate him,” replied a sheriff, “ if we contradict his express commands : we must find some other means more likely to succeed.” Many plans were proposed ; such as writing, sending the clergy as ambassadors, &c. ; but none met with general favour. At last a youth of the town, distinguished for his wit and ingenuity, advised an expedient, which had certainly the merit of originality.

“ We are forbidden,” said he, in a confident tone, “ to appear before the count, on foot or on horseback, or in carriages ; let us go on *stilts* !”

The words were no sooner uttered than they spread like lightning through the whole city, and elicited universal applause. The resolution of the citizens was soon taken, and the remainder of the day was employed in constructing a number of stilts. Those who could not readily walk when raised so far from the ground, supported themselves with poles or long crutches ; and on the next morning, five hundred of the inhabitants of Namur went out in this fashion to meet their prince.

The count, as soon as he perceived them issuing from the city gate, advanced from the camp to reconnoitre this extraordinary troop, which appeared in the distance like an army of giants. He soon saw what the stratagem was, and laughing at the sight of these men arranging themselves upon their stilts, in four lines before him, he sent his herald to intimate that he would give them audience. Thus encouraged, the deputies laid before the prince their reasons for thus approaching his presence, and then proceeded to submit their grievances for his consideration.

John of Namur was naturally a good-hearted and generous prince, and feeling that his authority had perhaps been stretched beyond its proper limits, he at once

forgave the people their rebellion, and contented himself with merely enforcing some slight penalties upon the ringleaders. He also gave orders for the abolition of the more obnoxious of the taxes.

This happy result, which must be attributed to the lucky thought of the stilts, is gratefully remembered by the people of Namur; and an annual *fête* is still preserved in order to commemorate it. All the young men of the old, as well as the new town, assemble at certain periods, raised on stilts; they form themselves into a battalion, and marching to the sound of military music, direct their steps towards the Place St. Aubain. There they perform a joust. The *Mélans* and the *Abresses* (such are the names taken by the two parties, the first representing the old, the second the new town) employ all their agility in endeavouring to repulse each other. They have no arms but their fists; their mothers and sisters are on foot in the ranks, encouraging them in the struggle, and the ladies of the town ranged on two sides of the Place St. Aubain, animate each party by voice and gesture. This fight often continues the whole day, without either side being victorious.

It must be admitted, however, that the origin of this custom has been variously given. Some say it was first established during the reign of Charles the Fifth; but this is a mistake, as we see it mentioned in chronicles long before that period. Galiot, who wrote six large volumes on the history of Namur, traces this game to the time of the Romans, and endeavours to prove, what everybody knew before, that the ancients were acquainted with the use of stilts. Others with more probability ascribe their origin to the inundations of the Meuse, which sometimes overflowed the streets of Namur. We have confined ourselves, however, to the most popular tradition, and certainly not the least agreeable one.



The Bridge of Judgment.

“ Un fils ne s'arme point contre un coupable père.”

“ A son arms not himself against even a guilty father.”

PERHAPS the most frequented of the numerous bridges which connect the various parts of the city of Ghent, is that which bears the name of the “ Bridge of Judgment.” It is carried across one of the three rivers which are comprised within the precincts of the old city, and unite themselves with the Scheldt : crossing the Sieve, it leads from the Rue de Bourg to the Place St. Pharaïlde. It is a bridge of modest structure, and is no way remarkable except for the historical recollections with which it is connected.

A monument formerly adorned this bridge, consisting of a bronze group, which represented a son in the act of beheading his father ; and this explains the names—*Hoofil Brugge* (Bridge of the Head), and *Onthoofil Brugge* (Bridge of the Decapitation), which the common people still give to the Bridge of Judgment. This valuable piece of antiquity, which was barbarously destroyed with so many others in 1794, recalled the ancient national costume, while it also commemorated an event the memory of which is now perpetuated only by a curious picture preserved in one of the halls of the Hôtel de Ville.

The circumstance represented by this picture is so remarkable and so little known, that it will be worth while to give the particulars of the story in detail.

After the daughter of Count Louis de Maele, Marguerite of Flanders, had espoused, in 1369, Philip, duke of Burgundy, brother of the king of France, Charles the Ninth ; the English, discontented with this alliance, which they had eagerly sought for their own prince, declared war against the Flemings.

Count Louis de Maele had consented to this marriage with much unwillingness, and but for the earnest entreaties of his mother, who was a French-woman, he would have given his daughter to the English prince. He knew that the Flemings were on friendly terms with the English, with whom they carried on an extensive commercial intercourse ; and he feared, inconsiderate as he generally was, to displease his people. But Philip had gained the good will of the Flemings, to whom he had restored Lille, Douai, and other towns ; and his marriage with Marguerite was celebrated in the church of St. Bavon, at Ghent, amidst general rejoicings.

Since the administration of Artevelde, the prosperity of Ghent had become so great, that all the merchants lived in the utmost affluence and luxury, more resembling princes and nobles than inhabitants of a commercial city. As this abundance was the result of commerce, so commerce alone could preserve it ; and England, which at that time was greatly behindhand in all the branches of industry, was the principal market for the products of Flanders. Thus when the war which broke out in 1369 had suddenly interrupted all communication with the English, and the Flemish vessels had been seized, and their merchandise confiscated, many of the commercial houses were completely ruined ; and these disasters affected in a thousand different ways a multitude of people little prepared for reverses. Murmurs soon arose. Two parties were formed, of which one declared for the court and its measures ; but the other and larger was in favour of the English, and loudly demanded peace with that nation.

Louis de Maele, however, who, though he frequently hesitated in coming to a decision, rarely departed from it when formed, declared in 1370 all relations with the English at an end ; forbade all communication with them ; and at last issued an edict, condemning to death any one who should carry on commercial dealings with them. The usual punishment of the transgressor for such offences was the gallows ; but the citizens of Ghent were treated with greater consideration by the grant of an especial privilege. Instead of being hanged, they were allowed to

be beheaded, as of the rank of gentlemen,* upon the "Bridge of Judgment," a few steps from the count's castle.

The people were greatly exasperated at this edict. England had need of Flanders for the supply of its necessities ; Flanders required England for the continuance of its prosperity ; and thus, notwithstanding the declaration of war, every day, cloths, linens, and even vegetables continued to be secretly disposed of to the English. Commercial men in those days said, what has often been repeated since, that money, from whatever quarter derived, is the enemy of no man. Many of the tradesmen therefore braved the edict, and privately continued their advantageous transactions ; which for some time were carried on so successfully, that the officers employed by the count were unable to lay hold of a single culprit.

At last, however, in the month of June, 1371, two merchants, Liévin Verbaghen and his son Michel, were taken in the act of delivering into the hands of some Englishmen a cargo of Courtrai linen, and were forthwith arrested and ordered to be sent to trial. The residence of the Verbaghens was in the Rue Obscure, near the Marché du Vendredi, and it was necessary to pass through the immense crowd, all ripe for sedition, before arriving at the prison. They were, however, conveyed there in safety by the officers of justice ; were speedily judged and condemned ; and by way of making a striking example of them, it was announced that on the following day the criminals would be executed upon the bridge, at eleven o'clock in the morning.

The people did not openly rebel, but they did not therefore remain indifferent ; and the following morning, on the day of the execution, the high bailiff acting in the name of the count, and as his administrator of justice, was unable to find a single executioner, although there were a considerable number belonging to the town.

In this country, which M. de Châteaubriand with so

* The citizens of Ghent are called officially "Seigneurs de Gand."

much truth calls the classical land of independence, the executioners were well aware that the people had the greatest share of power : they had not forgotten that sometimes the agent of human justice ran the risk of becoming in turn the victim ; and they had all judiciously absented themselves on this occasion. It was necessary, therefore, to send elsewhere ; but though Bruges, Alost, Courtrai, and other towns were applied to, no executioner could be found : all had been forewarned, and had carefully taken themselves out of the way. The head bailiff then went to inform the count of this untoward circumstance, and even ventured to hint to him the policy of at least postponing the sentence. Louis, however, was obstinate : he refused either to pardon the culprits, or to grant a reprieve. A large sum was offered, by his order, to any person who should be willing to fulfil the office of executioner ; but no one appeared. The different prisons were then visited, and a free pardon offered to any criminal who would consent to do the work, but with no better success. No one dared, in fact, to run the risk of arousing the anger of the populace. The judge was much embarrassed, and for awhile knew not what to do : at last he hit upon an expedient, which, being submitted to the count, and approved of, he proceeded to carry into effect. He went to the dungeon of the father and son, and, after a few preliminaries, announced to them, that whichever of the two should consent to be the executioner of the other, should have his pardon. He then left them, allowing them the night to consider the proposal. It was some time before the father and son recovered from the stupor into which they had been thrown by so extraordinary an announcement. At last, when their oppressed feelings had found vent in a flood of tears, a strange and affecting dialogue took place between them.

"My father," said the young man, "the offer which has just been made holds out to you an anchor of safety." At this beginning, the old man looked at his son with great uneasiness, while the latter continued : "You have two other sons, who will grow up and supply my place

to you. Strive to forget me, and return to your home."

"Without thee! without my son! without my dear child! I dare not so understand your words," replied the old man, bitterly. "Art thou not my son? Is it not I who have brought thee to this misery?"

"No, my father, it was myself; it was my own rashness."

"As if I were no longer father and master! It was I—I alone . . . and to abandon thee to . . . I cannot even pronounce the word. . . . My son," continued the old man, "I am sixty years old: of what use am I any longer? No; since they have the humanity to grant thee thy life, I pardon them my own death. Thou shalt sacrifice me, my dear child; and thou shalt be the support of thy mother, thy young brothers, and thy sister."

"I . . . I do that, my father!" replied Michel, shuddering; "never!" and in an agony of tears he embraced his aged parent.

"If thou doest it, I shall bless thee for it, my son. Thou must do it. I must leave thee. . . . But if, by cowardly hesitation, thou lovest the favour which is now offered us, thou wilt die not the less, and thou wilt fill me with despair."

"My father," said Michel again, "let us not talk any more of so horrible a proposal; or rather, let your heart yield to reason. What do you lose in losing me? You have other children, and I . . . if I survive you, where shall I find another father? . . . A father is not so easily replaced . . ."

"But, since I am to die, since they will it."

"But, since it is in your power to obtain pardon."

"At such a price! Death even is preferable to that."

"Well, my father, I will die with you!"

This sorrowful conversation lasted all night, without the father and son coming to any agreement. At last, the door of the dungeon opened. The fatal moment had arrived.

"How have you decided?" asked the judge.

The old man, at these words, gathered up all his strength, threw himself on his son, and violently closed his mouth with his hand.

"We are ready," he cried; "my son will behead me."

"Here then is a confessor," said the bailiff, and closed the door again.

Michel had fainted, and his father was bathing him with his tears. More than a quarter of an hour elapsed before he began to revive, and for the first time he observed the old monk who had entered the dungeon.

He was an Augustine friar, a man respected and beloved by all the town for his virtues and good works. Since the previous evening the cruel proposal made to the two prisoners had become generally known; and the whole body of the watermen had gone to engage this monk to repair to Iâévin and Michel, in order to render them spiritual assistance. In all the churches and chapels in the town, moreover, prayers were being offered up for them. People almost asked for a miracle: "Why," they said, "should not God perform it? Could not that powerful hand, which changed the seasons at its will, change also with ease the order of material things, and so satisfy by prodigy the prayers of a hundred thousand voices raised to him in supplication?"

The monk strengthened greatly the hearts of the two captives: he supported the old man's proposal, used all his authority with Michel to make him yield obedience to his father's wishes, and bid him expect, as the reward of his heroic devotion, the support of the Most High.

And now the two prisoners, crossing the Place de Saint Pharaïlde, and the Rue Haute du Soleil, were conducted by the archers to the Bridge of Judgment.

The count, fearing a revolt of the people, had surrounded the place with a numerous body of men-at-arms, so that the crowd were unable to approach the place of execution. He himself was in one of the towers of the castle, looking through one of the loopholes, at the scene below. Four servants of the prince remained, according to custom, standing upon the bridge, with pails

of water to wash away the blood about to be shed. The high bailiff stood before them in his judge's dress, with a velvet cap upon his head, adorned with three white feathers, and bearing in his hand a long rod, surmounted by the lion of Flanders, in silver. The two ends of the bridge were guarded by four ranges of archers, wearing their cuirasses. Liévin and Michel stepped in front of the high bailiff, who read aloud the novel sentence, by which the count granted life to whichever of the two prisoners should execute the other. "My brother," said the monk, in a low voice, seizing Michel's trembling hand, "God watches over you; have confidence in Him and He will protect you. Do not tremble, my dear son."

They bound the old man's eyes, who immediately knelt down, blessed his son aloud, and laying his head upon the block, awaited his death-blow. "Proceed, young man," said the monk, who had gained a powerful ascendancy over Michel. And Verhaghen mechanically received into his hand a long straight sword, with which he was to perform the dreadful office. On beholding the formidable instrument of death, he sank down, weeping and praying afresh; and for one instant he seemed utterly insensible. The monk raised him up, and then averting his eyes, the young man lifted up the heavy sword, which immediately descended upon the neck of his father. c

At this moment the monk was seen stretching out his arms to heaven in an attitude of supplication. A universal exclamation burst forth, and obliged the son to turn his eyes towards the block. What was his astonishment to find that the neck of his father had not even been injured, while the sword was shivered into twenty fragments! The surprise of the archers and attendants was so great that, without the slightest resistance from them the bridge was in an instant crowded with the townspeople, and the two prisoners were dragged into the asylum of Saint Bavon.

The high bailiff, overpowered with amazement, went to inform the count of what had taken place; and the

chronicles which record this fact, seem to be less astonished at the prodigy of the broken sword, than at the clemency of Louis de Maele in granting a full pardon.

The same evening Liévin and Michel returned in safety to their home in the Rue Obscure. After the peace, which took place in 1387, they were able again to resume in safety their commerce with the English.



‘Long-nail.’

THE cruelties which the Duke Alba inflicted upon the Belgians during the period of his government are but too well known. Scarcely was there a town in which the blood-stained scaffold was not erected ; not one where the funeral pile did not whiten the bones of thousands of unfortunate beings, and where the sword and the axe of executioners did not grow blunt upon the necks of their numberless victims. To seize and torture—to hang, burn, and behead—such, say the historians, was the daily business of Alba. Belgian blood flowed in streams upon the soil of our fatherland. Noble, precious blood ! that was to ripen the seed of freedom, and rescue and set us free from those bonds which the Emperor Charles V. had cast upon the necks of our fathers !

In the year 1571, thousands of Belgians quitted their country, and wandered about upon the soil of the stranger. So long as the little means they had carried with them lasted, their condition was not wholly unendurable ; but bitter poverty soon stripped them of everything. Foreign sympathy ended when their wants began ; and in their most pressing need they were denied the slightest assistance : thereupon they assembled in great numbers, under the name of *gensen*, placed themselves under the leadership of the Prince of Orange, and solemnly swore, with sword in hand, to found a state near the graves of their fathers—a state where they also might one day slumber, and rest beside the bones of the dear departed. Their enterprise did not, however, succeed. Alba was too crafty and energetic, and knew too well how to forestall or frustrate all their designs. Their effective forces were divided into land or bush *gensen*, who found refuge in the dense forests ; and sea or water *gensen*, who scoured the wide wave in swift vessels, and plundered the Spanish fleets. These sea *gensen* were commanded by Count Van

der Marck, lord of Lumey, surnamed "Long-nail," because he had sworn never to cut his nails till the deaths of Counts Egmont and Horn were fully avenged.

CHAPTER I.

IN the year above named, on the banks of the Scheldt, and in the vicinity of the spot where Fort St. Lawrence now stands, lay the ruins of some houses, which had been burnt down. In the midst of them rose a few walls, which were scarcely kept from falling: they were so ruined and decayed by age, that one could look through the fissures as through so many loopholes: blackened and burnt rafters and fallen fragments obstructed the entrance to the interior of the ruins.

It was in October of the same year, 1571: the citizens of Antwerp had already exchanged the terrors of the day for troublous dreams, for it had just struck eleven from the lofty clock-tower of Our Lady's church. Dark, heavy clouds, driven by a violent hurricane, careered through the heavens, and at intervals, through the scattered moonbeams, built up a thousand enchanted forms, and came rolling, like gigantic monsters, against the silver coronal of light with which the rising goddess of Night was encircled, but which did not always remain intact; for when one of those mountainous clouds heaved onward, she was not unfrequently entirely enveloped, and both town and ruins were then involved in the thickest gloom.

In this changeful light one could, however, clearly perceive, wandering among the ruins, two dark shapes, silent and listening. In eager curiosity they raised their heads from time to time above the dismantled walls, rapidly threw an anxious glance over the rushing waters of the Scheldt, and an instant after disappeared into the recess which served them for a hiding-place. It would have been difficult to recognise them, or to guess upon what

design they were bent ; but we will here impart to our readers the little we know upon the matter.

The elder of the two night-watchers was Albrecht van Schoonhoven, a gentleman of one of the first families of the town ; the other was his son Alfred : their bodies were encircled in long heavy cloaks, and a broad hat covered their head and face. Whenever a moonbeam accidentally shone upon them, their daggers and the butt-ends of their pistols sparkled brightly under their dark garments.

They had waited there for a considerable time, and had turned with stealthy pace from the ruins to the Scheldt, and from the Scheldt back again to the ruins ; yet their ears had caught no sound, save the rolling of the waters and the unceasing piping of the north wind. At length the father, leaning his elbow upon one of the blocks of stone, said to his son, in a low voice,—

"Alfred, do you not think your courage will sink when his body-guard draws near ?"

"No !" returned the youth, sighing : "in the midst of his Spanish life-guard I will plunge the dagger in his heart, if God give me strength."

"Have you well reflected, Alfred, that your life is at stake ? Are you aware that a Belgian never came safe out of the clutches of Alba ? Think over all maturely, for if you flinch, it is useless to undertake the matter."

"My lord and father !" interrupted the youth, "are you trying to make me swerve from my destiny ? Think you, then, that the blood of my brother Norbert, which still clings to the stones of the market-place of Brussels, is already forgotten ? Do you then no longer hear the voice of my brother, which from out the cold grave cries for Heaven's vengeance upon his murderer ? Oh ! that cry still resounds in my ears : there, in the darkness, does not his shade flit by, threatening,—threatening, because his butcher still lives ? My heart is wrung within me with fury ; and, meditating upon the tortures endured by our gallant countrymen, my teeth gnash involuntarily, and my hand grasps the poniard. Oh ! speak not to me of danger, I pray you, father ! Whether I dwell with

God among the beheaded nobles, our dear, true friends, or hurl the chains of fatherland to hell with the abhorred soul of this Alba——"

"More gently, my son! you speak too loud; but listen, do you hear nothing?"

They quickly turned towards the Scheldt, and cast a glance over the waters.

"The 'Long-nail' does not come," continued the father, "and yet the hour is already past. You, Alfred, can see better with your young eyes: do you see nothing approaching there, yonder?"

"Nothing, father."

"Not the smallest little sail?"

"No; the murmuring waters throw the spray, white and shining, on high; but not one object shows itself on the surface."

They listened repeatedly, and looked several times up and down.

"Stay! there, I see something!" now exclaimed the young man; "yonder in the distance it comes: it is a galley, I think. Ay, ay; curses on them, they are Spaniards!"

And they drew back quickly to the interior, and sat down upon a heap of stones. Albrecht drew the broad folds of his mantle closer round him, and said softly to his son,—

"Alfred, what I have just uttered was not spoken to take away your courage: were you capable of flinching—were you too faint-hearted to risk your life for fatherland—you were no true Belgian; and I would disown you for my son; but if our project succeed—could you but sacrifice this bloodhound—oh, how I would bless you! bless the hour of your birth, and thank God for having permitted one like you to spring from my race! Go on, then, my son, and may God strengthen you: may your heart ever grow in courage, and Maria become one day the noble recompense!"

Alfred blushed deeply with love and courage at these words. For a long time had he scoured the seas, like a bold water *gense*, in company with the "Long-nail," and

joyfully had Maria bestowed her heart upon the hardy youth. Precipitated thus suddenly into his love-dream, his heart beat so impetuously, that he was unable to utter a word. He continued sitting some minutes longer on that comfortless spot, but suddenly leaped up, and peered over the walls upon the hurrying waters. While he, with his keen eyes, which day by day had been wont to scan the wide expanse of the sea, looked anxiously down the stream, the father still sat below, with his hand before his eyes. A tear of love and anxious foreboding trickled through his fingers : Was he thinking that he would soon have no son ? did he behold the angel of death approaching that beloved one, with threatening aspect ?

"Father !" whispered Alfred, "long live the *gensen* ! A sail ! it is dipping there behind the sand-bar !"

"A sail ! thank God !" said the old man, starting up impetuously, and following with his eyes the direction indicated by Alfred's finger ; "a sail, say you, but where ?"

Just then a cloud flitted before the moon ; the Scheldt lay in deep darkness ; and the sail sank away among the black shadows.

"Did you see it well ?" he demanded repeatedly ; "or has not the name of 'Maria' been playing you a trick ? By my soul, I see nothing."

Like a lightning-flash a moonbeam shot over the waves.

"There ! Do you see it now, father ?"

"Ay, i' faith, it is the 'Long-nail.'"

A few moments after, a shallop sped through the waves and ran to shore, while a larger vessel held off at a little distance. Ten men and a female form landed, and were soon standing in the ruins by the side of the two *gensen*. One of the new comers seemed to be the chief ; it was not his lofty stature, nor the greater richness of his dress, that pointed him out as such, but the extraordinary power which the slightest tone of his voice, or gesture of his hand, or glance of his eye, exercised over all. His companions followed blindly whithersoever he led ; ay, if upon the deck of his ship, with the point of his dagger directed towards the shore, he were to stand and exclaim, "Forward !" there was not one whom that iron word

would not have urged onward, even though a host of enemies lined the shore.

After this singular man had recognised and exchanged a few words with the two inmates of the ruins, he turned to the others who had accompanied him, and exclaimed :—

"My men, keep an eye on the vessel, and have your ears open! Let the points of your daggers and the matches of your firelocks keep watch equally with your ears and eyes, so that nothing may stir without your hearing it, and nothing move without your seeing it."

And the sailors hastened to the shore, where they concealed themselves behind one of the dismantled walls, and looked attentively around them. All was silent and motionless; only at intervals, when the north wind blew more violently upon the matches, their light glowed in the darkness, somewhat like the eyes of the wild cat or the wood-owl.

The "Long-nail"—for he was the man of lofty stature—now descended the damp stair of a ruined cellar, in company with Van Schoonhoven, Alfred following, together with the female figure.

"By heavens, it is darker here than any dungeon—ay, darker than the soul of that bloodhound Alba!" exclaimed the "Long-nail," when they got to the bottom; but Van Schoonhoven said,—

"Have patience a little; I am provided with everything necessary."

He took a flint from his pocket, and in an instant a match was lighted.

"Now say once more that the Spaniards only have Toledo blades," cried he, laughing; "is not mine a famous steel?"

The match soon blazed forth under Alfred's powerful breath, and presently a torch cast its mysterious light upon the four persons in the cellar.

Count Van der Marck, lord of Lumey, was a well-built man, with bronzed cheeks and a sparkling eye. Thick reddish whiskers curled round his cheeks, and a short, pointed beard covered his chin. He was well provided

with arms on this occasion, and a steel breastplate gleamed under his doublet.

His daughter Maria was a beautiful, youthful maiden, whose features proclaimed her a Lutticher, with those sparkling eyes, hair blacker than a raven's wing, and sharply-pencilled eyebrows, which one sees amongst the Wallons. Little did her dress bespeak the gentleness of her race, or the nobility of her birth; for, instead of silk and satin, she wore only coarse woollen cloth, and her bodice and simoar waved round her slender frame without any lappets, flaps, or ribbons: a small felt hat covered her bound-up hair. In such array, she appeared like some youth just hastening to the chase, rather than a young maiden. Her keen, unconstrained glance announced that she had long exchanged the peaceful life of a woman for the stirring, restless life of men.

Scarcely had the torch sent forth a flame, when she turned laughingly to her beloved, and said,—

"But, friend Alfred, is it come to this with us; that a rat-hole is to become the dwelling of your bride; give me a seat at least."

"It is still a blessing of Heaven for us, that we are able to cast one glance upon the ruins of our city," answered the youth bitterly, pointing to a heap of clay which might serve as a seat.

"Hallo, my maiden! avast, youngster!" cried "Long-nail." "Not so hasty; and don't let the word 'bride' and 'bridegroom' escape your lips so easily. You have not yet gained the sea-queen of the *water gensen*."

"Father," replied the maiden with a laugh, as she pointed to the old Van Schoonhoven; "go on with your conversation, you two; and I will bestow upon my Alfred strength and courage to gain me; for he and no other will ever be my head man."

"Eh! see there," interrupted "Long-nail;" "how my little daughter flings out; but 'tis bravely said, Maria, bravely; I am right well content. You do not shame the proverb that says, 'Good blood can never lie.' Tomorrow I will invest you with supreme command of the fly-boat *Egmont*."

A strange expression flitted over Maria's features at that moment ; they grew more severe and cold, and her eyebrows were knitted closer together.

"Do you not, then, rely upon my being able to guide a vessel, father ? Think you, forsooth, that I shrink before Spanish blood ? No, never ! The enemy's bullets—and well you know it—whistle round my cheeks without making them blanch. One does not need the strength of a man to discover an enemy's heart ; whoever loves fatherland, even if it be a woman, finds courage to defend it."

And with these words she drew a dagger from her bosom, exclaiming,—

"By *this* shall Alba fall !"

"Long-nail" pressed his daughter with soul-felt joy to his heart ; the whole countenance of the rough seaman glowed with delight, and a starting tear stood in his burning eyes.

"My child !" he cried ; "my noble child !" More than this he was unable to utter.

CHAPTER II.

THE Count Van der Marck had withdrawn, together with Van Schoonhoven, into a corner of the cellar ; Alfred was sitting upon the stone near Maria. He gazed upon her in deep sadness ; his countenance was pale, and sighs broke at intervals from his breast.

"What is then amiss, Alfred ?" inquired Maria softly ; "what ails you ; what makes you so sad and voiceless ?"

"My beloved, my bride, are you aware that I might sacrifice my life without possessing you, without beholding you again ?" asked the youth, while an anxious tear stole over his cheek.

"But Alfred, my beloved, my brother !" sighed the maiden ; "you will not die ; wherefore do you overwhelm me with care, and cause my heart to shrink ? Talk not

of such things, and tear not the veil from my eyes, my poor Alfred."

The youth was silent awhile ; he seemed to be gathering up in his spirit the courage that was almost lost,—the strength that had almost sped. Then he raised his head, twined his arms round Maria, whose eyes had likewise become moistened, and softly asked, "Will you pray to God for me, Maria?"

"Ay, truly!" answered the maiden. "Each day, when far away, ere the morning sun shall have risen over the sea, my tears shall be poured out before the Lord, and I will entreat Him to be merciful to you and to our country."

"But do you not esteem it a crime to attack and murder a man secretly, whatever that man may be, not in honourable strife, but ——"

"Alfred, Alfred!" cried the maiden, "does the voice of fatherland no longer find an echo in your breast? Do you hesitate to avenge the death of our brother? Am I to think this of you?—speak!"

"Calm yourself, my love! Nothing holds me back; neither the fear of punishment, nor the fear of death. To him who is alone upon the earth, death is nothing; but when one soul lives in the soul of another, then death is doubly death. The thought of this crushes my very heart,—and you too, Maria, will you droop away like a flower that is trampled on?"

Maria trembled at these words; she took the hand of her beloved, and carried it to her moistened eyes.

"For God's sake, Alfred, speak not thus. Your words fall so heavily, so painfully upon my heart."

But the youth continued:

"If it were true, however; if a prison were to separate me from you,—if the axe of the executioner were to fall between us,—what should I have gained by my daring?"

Maria grew pale, and answered not; but presently her cheeks took a deeper colour, her eyes beamed with new fire, her voice grew stronger, and she answered solemnly:

"What would you have, Alfred? Heaven, and bliss with God, and your grave would be our bridal bed."

Proud to be yours, even after death, I would remain your betrothed, and your spirit would rejoice in my truth."

"Angel! you overcome me with your generosity!" cried Alfred. "Be it even so; give me the steel that hath so often heard the throbbings of your heart; let me from your hands receive the instrument of liberation of our fatherland."

Rapturously Alfred knelt before her; with a deep sigh she drew the dagger from her bosom, gave it to the youth, and softly whispered,—

"May it not become the instrument of your death!"—and two heavy tears dropped upon the glittering steel. Alfred pressed it to his heart with emotion, and kissed the tears away—tears of faith and love; hallowed drops, which quickened in him faith and love.

"Long-nail" and Van Schoonhoven gazed silently upon the two, who had so entirely forgotten that they were not alone; the two parents pressed each other's hand in deep emotion.

"By my topsail!" at length cried "Long-nail," "are you off to the Crusade, sir knight, or would you fain defend the honour of your lady in some tourney?"

"No, father," replied Maria; "he is going to shorten the chains of our country, and—your nails."

"For which purpose you are going to Brussels to-morrow. My son, is it not so? Such is the resolution you have come to?"

"To-morrow?" inquired Alfred, visibly agitated; "already to-morrow?"

"Already to-morrow?" sighed Maria, as if an echo in her breast had repeated the words of her beloved.

"Ay, to-morrow!" was the answer of the inexorable father.

Alfred could with difficulty control himself. He thought upon the speedy parting; and Maria also covered her eyes with both hands. "Long-nail" pressed her compassionately to his breast. "How can you weep, my child!" he said; "how like a hero will Alfred stand before you, after his feet have trampled on the monster!"

Maria sank upon her father's neck.

"Young man!" continued "Long-nail," addressing Alfred; "all this has lasted long enough, and I must no longer see a *water gensen* dropping tears. Here is a letter which I have sealed with the *gensen* seal; instantly on your arrival at Brussels, deliver it to friend Schrieck; he will give you further information about the movements of the bloodhound. Lord van Schoonhoven, the time is up; Maria, take a short farewell,—and make haste!"

The lovers sank into each other's arms; once more their hands thrilled with trembling pressure, and they parted.

The skiff soon put off to the vessel, which rapidly sped away.

CHAPTER III.

ON the following morning, Alfred set out upon the road to Brussels. Gloomy visions encompassed him; he beheld headsman with naked swords, and blood, and ghastly heads crowding around him in confused throng, and a ferocious assemblage of people came howling in his ears; and there in the midst stood Maria wringing her hands. All the terrible scenes of the year 1568 passed before his eyes once more; he had stood upon the market-place at Brussels, where the lords of Butenburg and sixteen other nobles were executed. A cold sweat poured down his body, and was rapidly succeeded by a burning heat. How frantically did he dig his spurs into the sides of his courser, which now sped onward with the rapidity of lightning, but not quickly enough for the youth. The abbey of Contich was soon far behind him, then he hurried over the small bridge of the Neth, passed by Mechlin, and the strong castle of Vilbord, and reached Brussels.

Two hot fumes came steaming violently from the nose of his charger; flakes of foam covered the tired horse, and white dust the rider, from head to foot.

"What in the streets stood still in curiosity as the knight hurried by. No sooner did Alfred perceive with God's

this, than he checked his steed into a slower trot ; and at length allowed it to proceed with gentle pace until it stood still before the house of Schrieck.

The host received Alfred in the most friendly manner, and led him into a room where a numerous company was assembled.

"My lord," cried Schrieck, "I have the honour to present you young Alfred Van Schoonhoven. You will not take it ill that he should appear before you booted and spurred."

Loud salutations and greetings welcomed the youth ; but he did not feel himself at ease among this company, for on those haughty countenances there at once appeared something like contempt, and he fancied he could read in more than one the question,—

"Wherefore comes the *gense* ?"

He quickly turned his eyes away from them ; their language and habiliments were Spanish, and consequently an abhorrence to him ; he therefore asked Master Schrieck to have a word with him in private. Both retired into a neighbouring room and sat down upon the richly-covered chairs.

"Master Schrieck," began Alfred, "I am sent to you by persons who reckon you amongst their friends ; they must have miscalculated, since Spaniards and enemies fill your house. Tell me, an' it please you, whether my conjecture is true or not, for in the latter case my embassy is at an end."

Schrieck was not a little provoked by the bold questions of the youth, and he answered with visible displeasure.

"Young man, your words are entirely misplaced. Think you that I love my fatherland less than you ? How dare you charge me with treachery ? In sooth, that is bad behaviour !"

"Bad behaviour !" repeated Alfred. "Is it seemly in a true-hearted Belgian to play the host to the favourites of the bloodhound ? Do you not fear that perfidy and blood-thirstiness will sink into your heart with their very breath ? You stroke a tiger, but beware !" .

"That is truly the saying of the impetuous youth who, through his capricious imagination, ever magnifies both good and evil. A statesman must also stroke those who have teeth to bite. I don't know what is in your mind, young man ; you look upon me as a traitor outright ; are not you afraid of my taking vengeance for this insult ? Verily, it is bold of you."

Alfred's mistrust now disappeared, for Schrieck's features were so grave and honest, that the young man believed he had found in him a gallant *gensen* heart ; he still proceeded with caution, however, and said,—

"Excuse, Master Schrieck, the little experience I have hitherto had ; I might easily be mistaken. The matter upon which I have to treat with you is, however, of so great moment, that I neither can nor must disclose it, until you have assured me of your opinion respecting Alba."

So soon as Schrieck heard that it referred to Alba and secret business, his whole countenance changed, as well as the tone of his voice. Drawing near the youth, he whispered to him in a friendly manner,—

"You are right, and I cannot sufficiently admire your foresight. The duke is a tyrant, a blood-thirsty, despicable wretch, who is striving to subvert and drain our country by torturings and murders, and by his ten-pennies. That is my opinion about Alba ; and with respect to the Spaniards whom you see in my house, it is they who inform me of the secret counsels of the duke, whereby I am enabled to give intelligence to our good friends the *gensen*."

While he was uttering these words with great rapidity, the youth drew slowly from under his doublet "Long-nail's" letter, delivered it to Schrieck, and answered :

"I see, Master Schrieck, that you are a true and warm-hearted Belgian. The letter of Count Van der Marck will further inform you why I am here."

Schrieck glanced rapidly over the letter, which acquainted him with Alfred's mission, and asked for his aid and support. Joy now filled his heart, and he said,—

"Young stranger, you will doubtless pass the night at my house. It will be a great honour for me in every

way. Only let me hurry off for the present ; tell no one anything about the affair, for cunning foxes are round and about you. I will take care that you obtain an audience with the duke, and then——"

The remaining words he whispered in Alfred's ear ; the latter appeared gratified beyond measure, and allowed himself, at Schriek's persuasion, to be conducted by a servant to his room.

CHAPTER IV.

NEXT morning, early, a man stood by the bed of the young Antwerper.

"Young man," he said, in a soft voice, "at ten o'clock I will lead you to the duke ; prepare yourself strongly beforehand to sacrifice this scourge of fatherland."

So saying, he quitted the youth again, and retired cautiously.

While Alfred dressed himself in haste, a thousand sad thoughts rose before his soul. To drive them off as much as possible, he looked repeatedly at the dagger which Maria had given him ; and he examined his pistol also attentively. When he found they were in the best condition, he poured a double charge of powder into the barrel, and above this an iron bullet. He then fixed it, and with a strange expression in his features he weighed the weapon, saying, with an earnest sigh,—

"This procures the freedom of my country !" and weighing it once again, he said, with a deeper accent,—

"And obtains her whom I adore !" And was not his whole happiness, his love, as well as the freedom of fatherland, comprised within that barrel ? He was just whispering again the name Maria, when the door opened :

"Are you ready, young man ?" inquired Schriek.

"I am ready," replied the *gense*, concealing the pistol under his doublet.

"Well, then, let us go."

They were soon standing in the sumptuous palace of the duke ; a password from Schriek opened a way for

them through the body-guard, to a small apartment furnished with large heavy seats.

"Alfred," said Schrieck, with a muffled voice, "the duke will come here to you forthwith. I have made him believe that you have an important secret to reveal. As he is inquisitive in the extreme, he will not keep you waiting long. But mind you do not fail, for then all is lost, and he is terrible in his rage."

"Does he always wear his armour?" asked Alfred.

"Assuredly," answered Schrieck, "it never leaves him. You can easily strike him, however, and in this way: when he asks from you the revelation of your secret, then approach him nearer and nearer, and plunge your dagger at last into his throat under the chin; neither gorget nor breastplate can prevent that. And now, good courage, and let not your heart shrink."

"Be at ease," sighed the youth, "the strife is at an end."

"Sit down awhile," said Schrieck withdrawing; "perchance you may have to wait a little longer. But speak not, on your life, for the walls here have ears and tongues,—ears to listen and tongues to betray."

Alfred was now alone in the chamber; he wandered restlessly to and fro, meditating upon what he should say to the duke, so that he might have no misgiving as to his intention. He did not know that a ferocious eye was watching him from a side-room, and did not feel that Alba's burning glance was fixed upon him. At length impatience overcame him, and he threw himself down upon a seat; but scarcely had he sat down, when a cry of affright escaped his lips. A strange rustling was heard, iron springs leaped forward with a crash, and shut his body in a dreadful girdle, pressing tight his chest and forcing him down fast to the seat.

The youth struggled with giant strength against these bonds, but in vain; he seemed fast nailed to the ground. In spite of the constant, cutting pressure of the springs, however, Alfred did not give up resisting. It was a fearful spectacle, to see him thus with burning eyes, his hair on end, blue, swollen veins upon his noble fore-

head, white foam upon his lips, and boiling rage in his heart.

The door opened, and a man of tall stature entered the apartment with haughty gait. It was Alba: his face was bronzed and unusually long; his light grey eyes and read beard gave to his features an odious expression; a complete armour of steel protected him from every weapon; upon his head he wore a black velvet cap, from which a blood-red plume drooped, waving. Upon entering, he crossed his arms upon his breast, and laughed scoffingly at the despairing youth.

"Gense," he said with a sneer, "you come to assassinate Alba? a noble undertaking, truly! Do you then fancy, child, that the giant lets himself be taken by a dwarf? Contempt and pity should be your reward, for one should not protect oneself from fools. Plunge now the dagger under my chin, you conspirator and murderer!"

Alfred's rage knew no bounds; the dagger, still clasped in his hands, gleamed under their convulsive efforts.

"Tyrant that you are!" he cried, "you merit reprobation for all the suffering you have brought upon us; but be well assured that God will requite you, dastard Spaniard! An account shall you render for Egmont and Horn's blood, and for the blood of my brother Norbert, whom you murdered, and which cries to God for vengeance upon you!"

A scornful laugh was the duke's reply: he took a rod from the wall, struck the youth with it on the face, saying—

"See, beggar! in Spain we treat vagabonds and bad servants thus."

The *gense* grew frantic, the springs crashed under his struggling, blood streamed from his mouth, the settle swayed to and fro, but all in vain. During his struggles, and groanings, and maledictions, another thought appeared suddenly to flash through his soul; a smile wreathed his lips; with a joyful cry, and with the rapidity of an arrow, he put his hand under his doublet, and drew forth the pistol which he had almost forgotten.

"Now is your scoffing at an end, duke," he exclaimed ; "you do not escape me now ; it is my turn to laugh, and yours to grow pale.

The gense aimed the barrel straight at Alba's face, and laughed with delight at the terror of the duke. He then raised his eyes to heaven :—

"Thanks be to thee, O God my father, that I am permitted to avenge my country and my brother's blood ! Die, monster !"

And the iron bullet sped with such force against the hauberk of the duke, that Alba, stunned by the shock, was fain to cling to the wall for support.

The apartment was speedily filled with body-guards and courtiers. Long did the young Antwerper struggle with his foes, until they disarmed and bound him.

Did not some secret voice of foreboding tell the father in this moment that his son had fallen into the hands of the executioner ? Did not a secret voice tell Maria that the head of her beloved would fall upon the scaffold ?

CHAPTER V.

TOWARDS the end of November, on St. Andrew's day, there was erected before the Senate-house in Brussels a tall scaffold ; horse-soldiers with naked swords surrounded it, and thousands of dejected burghers covered the broad market-place. Deep mourning and anxious expectation filled every heart. The red blood-flag hung like a stain of shame from one of the windows of the Senate-house ; at the other windows were standing knights, and courtiers, and Spaniards. Among the latter was Alba, chiefly recognisable by his scornful eye, and by the order of the Golden Fleece which sparkled on his breast : he glittered with gold and precious stones ; a Florentine hauberk, with superb chasings and silver ornaments, encased his heavy body ; his fingers, covered with jewelled rings, hung negligently as it were upon the arms of a costly faldstool.

Thus he sat, looking down with indifference upon the thousand vengeful glances which were riveted upon him.

One could easily distinguish among the crowd, who had come from Flanders and who from Wallon Land. Here darkly flowed the black hair, and obscurely gleamed the dark eyes, of the Lutticher and Ardenner; there shone the golden hair and blue eyes of the children of the north; and there again the countenances which the sun of sea or field had bronzed. But there was one youth who particularly excited the wonderment of many a beholder, so charmingly beautiful was his countenance, and noble his slightly-browned cheek; so long the lashes of his keen black eye, so grave and solemn the expression which lay in his features; and, withal, a something so tender in the whole countenance, that one could scarcely guess whether it was a man, or whether one should rather take it for a maiden. None of the bystanders knew the individual who concealed such slender limbs under that coarse cloak, and pressed the cold stones with that little foot. The stranger was—Maria Van der Marck.

There had been much waiting, and a whole hour had already gone by since the people had assembled in the market-place, when suddenly a dull rumbling noise set the crowd in motion.

"Here he comes!" was echoed on every hand; and they all stood on tiptoe, and turned their heads towards the street through which the condemned was approaching.

In the midst of a throng of soldiers, armed with halberds and muskets, Alfred tottered towards the scaffold with downcast head. His hands were fastened behind his back, his hair was cut off close to the roots, and he was entirely clad in black velvet. With toilsome steps he mounted the blood-red ladder.

"How young he is!" sighed a burgher, opening a knife he had in his scrip.

"Only at that age has any one a heart full of heroism and self-sacrifice," said another, shaking his head dejectedly.

"He reckons not more than twenty summers," said a third with features deeply bronzed.

"By heavens, that is too young to die!"

"But he doesn't die—he won't die!" said a stalwart merchant.

"Not die, do you say?" exclaimed many voices; "not die? What miracle do you hope for, then?"

"There's no need for miracles: they say the duke will accord a respite."

"A respite?" asked the man with bronzed face. A respite? who?—Alba?—Ay, who shows mercy like the rocks descending with crushing fall upon the wayfarer;—mercy, like the axe which cleaves, but does not listen;—mercy, like the executioner, who pours out blood and laughs! Ay, and I repeat it, this Spanish monster is harder than the rock, more despicable and cowardly than the executioner, and more inexorable than the axe."

The bystanders were terror-stricken at these bold words, and looked with anxious wonderment upon this man. They could not conceive how a man could be venturesome enough to utter such unmeasured language. He, on the other hand, continued in the same tone; while his eyes glared around, curses and revilings against the Spaniards poured from his lips in a continuous stream. It was lucky for him that there was no traitor or soldier in the neighbourhood to hear his words.

Maria's eyes were immovably fastened on her beloved; upon her cheeks no tears were visible; but her heart wept tears of blood. She had made a vow to avenge Alfred, and kill the duke; to strengthen and fix her resolution, she had left her father secretly.

Alfred was standing with a priest upon the scaffold, while the executioner, with his hand upon the axe, waited for his head. Three trumpet-blasts resounded through the market-place, and a dead silence fell upon the multitude; the sentence was read out, declaring Alfred worthy of death, because he had made an attempt on the duke's life.

Every heart throbbed anxiously, every eye filled with

tears ; the dark-featured man alone continued to curse and revile.

Again the trumpet sounded ; every heart was contracted, for the victim prepared himself for death. Not a sigh was ventured in Alba's presence. Maria looked at Alfred unceasingly, and tried every expedient to make him recognise her, but without success.

Already the youth was kneeling, and uttering his last prayer, while the executioner was turning back his sleeves, in order to be able to strike with better effect. The prayer was ended. Alfred turned to the headsman to tell him he was ready, when his eye fell upon Maria. Both grew pale, the sad farewell hung like a cloud upon their features ; vast eternity was passing between them. A tear rolled from the eyes of both.

The headsman now seized the axe with both hands, swung it heavily above his head, and——

"Mercy ! mercy !" Maria cried, so that it resounded over the market-place.

"Mercy ! mercy !" echoed the anxious multitude, and the headsman held back awhile.

"Hurrah ! long live the *gensen* !" suddenly shouted a thundering voice ; and every eye was bent upon that dark-featured man, who now opened wide his cloak, uncovered the left hand, which till then he had concealed, and raised it aloft. Long crooked nails projected from each finger, and a hundred throats shouted——

"Lumey ! Lumey !"

"Long live the *gensen* !"

"Slay the foreigner !"

"Kill him ! slay him !"

"Hurrah ! The 'Long-nail !'"

Daggers, rapiers, and long knives flashed over all the crowd ; there was a wild outburst of yells and curses, and deafening cries.

"Murder ! murder !" howled the alarmed multitude, and hurried through the streets uttering maledictions. The Spanish cavalry rode against the terrified throng ; many perished under the horses' feet ; women lay crushed upon the ground.

Thereupon a signal was given from one of the windows of the Senate-house ; the headsman's axe descended, and the youth's head fell. Two flashes of blood shot up on high.

Maria pressed through the feet of the horses to the very scaffold ; flew up like an arrow ; dipped her right hand in the still smoking blood, and swooned. The headsman alone had perceived her.

In the evening all was still as death ; the stones of the market-place gleamed red with blood, and here and there lay a body horribly mangled by the hoofs of the horses ; all these were borne away on tumbrils by the executioners' assistants.

"Our merciful lord has ordered that these bodies shall be taken to the flayer's," said the executioners, as they were throwing the last upon the tumbril.

What did Maria do with that blood ?

She smeared it on her dagger, and plunged this, at the capture of Briel and Corkum, into fifty Spanish hearts.

A bullet at length struck her ; the last word as she fell was "*Fatherland !*"



The Fugitive Slave.

“Salve, ter salve, libertas !
Spargo nobis solamina.”

CHAPTER I.

GODFREY the Bearded was a noble prince. By birth count of Louvain, he acquired the title of duke of Lotharingia, gave to the princes of his house the dignity of dukes of Brabant, and annexed the marquisate of Antwerp to his already extensive dominions. He made Brussels his capital; and from that time, notwithstanding its then numerical inferiority, this town rapidly rose to the highest eminence.

In 1125, Brussels had only two churches,—Saint Géry, and Sainte Gudule; for the oratory of Saint Jacques, on the Candenberg, and other chapels, were not reckoned as parishes. Notre Dame de la Chapelle, too, of which some parts, it is said, still remain behind the high altar, was at this period only a small edifice: it was, moreover, in the suburbs of the town, which terminated on that side at the “Steenporte,” or Gate of Stone.

Godfrey, who bore the venerable name of the immortal liberator of the Holy Sepulchre, had himself also taken part in the Crusades, and had passed two years of his life in slavery at the hands of the Saracens. He owed his surname of the Bearded, in fact, to the vow which he had made in his captivity, not to shave his beard until the day of his release. Godfrey had for a long time projected the erection of a third church in Brussels, and had fixed upon a quarter called the Marsh, then occupied only by kitchen-gardens, at the entrance of the road of Saint Jacques, now the Rue de la Madeleine. This quarter was divided into small lots of ground, and belonged to a nobleman of Brussels, Matthieu de Warick by name, a

brother of the old magistrate to whom the duke of Brabant owed his deliverance from captivity. Godfrey, therefore, sent for him.

"You have as yet done nothing for the Crusade," said he to him, "and yet every nobleman has a duty to perform towards it. When I was a captive among the infidels, your brother undertook the journey in order to ransom me, for which I invested him, in return, with the office of magistrate of Brussels, and he has prospered. You are now old, as well as we. Will you not then take advantage of an opportunity which I am about to offer you, of doing God service, without the necessity of taking arms?"

"And without leaving Brussels? Assuredly, in that case, sire," replied Matthieu de Warick.

"You do not love change, I am aware; at our age, indeed, one does not easily alter one's habits. Well, you shall remain here, and you shall have the privilege, moreover, of wearing on your shoulder the red badge of the soldiers of the Cross."

"I shall be happy and proud to do so. Tell me, sire, what I must perform in order to deserve this honour?"

"Listen then, my old friend. Now that, thanks to God and to the pious Norbert, we have succeeded in putting down the disorders of Tanchelm at Antwerp; now that we are at peace, and the town increasing in prosperity and extent every day, it appears incumbent upon us to build a third church in Brussels to the glory of God."

"And an hospital for the pilgrims to Palestine? I have already thought of the same. But where shall we build it? and what part can I take in the work?"

"In the first place, I should wish it to be in the centre of your marsh. It is a vacant spot, but surrounded with habitations, which, when the roads are bad, are too far distant from Saint Géry and Sainte Gudule, the good patrons of our city. And next, your part will be to give the land, upon which the edifice which I desire to see, shall be built."

"Not only will I give the land for the church, sire, gratuitously and without reserve, but I will also give the

land for the hospital ; and when it pleases your highness, we will proceed to mark out the boundaries.

"Let us then go there immediately," replied Godfrey, delighted with the generosity of the worthy citizen. And the same day the site of the church was marked out. As for the hospital, it was not to be erected until afterwards. The deed of gift of these lands was signed in the presence of witnesses, and all Brussels resounded with the praises of Matthieu de Warick, on whose shoulder the prince then solemnly attached the ensign of the cross.

Nothing is so sympathetic as a generous example. As soon as the noble conduct of the donor of the land came to be known, everybody was excited to a noble rivalry. Godfrey announced that he would allow as much wood to be taken from his forests as might be wanted. The citizens offered stone, bricks, lime, and iron ; while all those who had horses or oxen in the town and its suburbs, agreed to make a journey once a week, for the purpose of transporting them. At the same time, a large number of workmen came forward, according to the custom of that period, to take up their abode within the inclosure, until the building should be finished. They were to encamp themselves around the works, and never to leave the precincts, except on Sundays. The gardeners, whose grounds were thus occupied, received as an indemnification, the privilege of establishing houses of refreshment in the vicinity of the camp. An altar was erected in a small house, of which the front wall had been removed ; a chaplain was appointed to offer up the holy sacrifice every morning, after which the labours of the workmen began. After supper, the chaplain had evening prayers, and the workmen chanted a hymn before retiring to rest.

How, it may be asked, did these people live, seeing that they had no regular pay ? This is easily explained : every one was desirous, in these times, of taking part in the construction of a church ; and this it is which accounts for the phenomenon of so many prodigious buildings, which seem to have been raised as if by enchantment, in days when there was so little money. Those who could

not contribute, either in materials or personal labour, did not on that account stand aloof : the church was to be the work of all, and in a manner the property of the whole town. And the existence of this feeling may enable us to comprehend the popular indignation caused by the iniquitous destruction of the sacred edifices of the Middle Ages, over which every townsman deemed himself to possess a kind of right of property. Humble citizens, small merchants, foreign artisans, gave freely such contributions as they could afford ; widows and poor families brought their little store of provisions ; drapers gave their stuffs ; tailors furnished clothes ; women who had nothing to give, mended the clothes and washed the linen of the workmen ; rich young men of the city would visit the work, and present a barrel of beer, or a sheep, or perhaps an entire ox ; grocers offered oil for the lights ; bakers gave the wood for the kitchen ; and millers brought their toll of meal at the close of the week.

For the reception and distribution of the offerings, which were made entirely common, each principal trade chose a master as its representative. The masters of the masons, stonecutters, carpenters, joiners, wood-carvers, tilers, locksmiths, painters, &c., arranged everything as in a well-ordered family, under the presidency of the chaplain ; and thus the works proceeded.

CHAPTER II.

THE buildings had been commenced about a year, when one day a fine robust-looking young man entered the inclosure, and requested to be admitted among the masons. It was the rule to receive every one who offered, provided he promised adherence to the rules ; and it may be mentioned in passing, that among the many hundred workmen who were employed, there was hardly an instance of any one having been discharged for improper conduct. The stranger was therefore presented at once with a trowel ; and on his entering into the same engagement as

the others, not to leave the inclosure until the church was finished, he was immediately set to work on a part of the building assigned to him by the overseer. It was soon discovered that this young man was a fugitive serf, of whom there were already several in the camp, the duke having granted to all the workmen the right of asylum. In those times the towns had just obtained their freedom ; but the greater part of the villages still remained in the possession of the nobles ; and servitude, though in a milder form than elsewhere, still existed in many parts of Brabant. The Crusades had given freedom to many of the serfs, who, going with their masters to Palestine, had thus been proclaimed free under the banner of the Cross. Those, however, who could not leave their soil, remained serfs.

The man whom we have introduced to the reader was named Simout : he had fled from Grimberghe, a fortified town belonging to the Bertholds, the opulent and powerful lords of Malines ; and hearing that there was an asylum open for the erection of a church at Brussels, he had come with the hope of finding an opportunity of setting out for the Holy Land, and thus becoming free. He had evidently, however, some other reason, of a private nature ; and his companions, seeing that some profound grief oppressed his heart, entreated him so strongly, and showed so lively an interest in him, that he at last consented to relate his history. •

He had been, as we have already said, a serf at Grimberghe, and was attached to the lands of the lord Gerard Berthold. The two brothers, Gerard and Walter, who possessed the lordship of Malines, had amassed great wealth through their extensive commerce. Their numerous vessels traded in all parts of Syria and Italy ; and, at a later period, it was said of them that there was not a single port of the known sea which the vessels of the Bertholds had not visited : they were in the twelfth century in the Low Countries what the Medicis were in Italy in the fourteenth.

The yoke which the Bertholds imposed upon their serfs was so far lighter, that they never refused—true

merchants as they were—to sell his liberty to any one who could afford to purchase it. This was one source of their riches ; and from it, in fact, they derived a good part of their wealth.

Now it happened that our hero had been captivated by the charms of Trudis, a beautiful Grimbergeoise, and the daughter of a serf like himself. His honest attachment had been reciprocated, and the lovers had already exchanged promises of marriage. The father of Trudis, however, who for twenty years had worked without intermission for one fixed object, saw himself one day in the possession of six marks of silver. Without saying a word to any one, he carried three of them to Lord Gerard, who in return gave him a charter of freedom for himself and his daughter. An hour afterwards he loaded two asses with his little baggage, and, as if he feared being retaken, left Grimberghe with all possible haste, taking with him his daughter Trudis, whom he no longer wished to see the wife of a serf, and his three remaining marks.

Trudis was less selfish ; but the poor girl was obliged to follow her father, without even seeing the young man again, whom she had thus to leave to his servitude and his grief. As for poor Simout, he was in great consternation, for he had counted upon Trudis's affection, and had never dreamt of such a catastrophe. He lost no time, however, in tracing their steps ; and having succeeded in discovering that they had taken the road to Brussels, he delayed not a moment, but made his escape during the night, and reached Brussels in safety. We have seen how he established himself there.

In the walks which the workmen were accustomed to take in groups on the holidays, Simout thought of nothing but discovering the retreat of his beloved Trudis. Three months passed away, and, meeting with no success in his researches, he began to give way to grief, and to despair of ever finding again the object of his affections. One day, however, towards the end of September, at the time when the workmen were assembled for their second repast, an ass laden with panniers filled with pears arrived at the

camp, which was said to be the property of the new gardener of Borgendal, who was about to make his first offering to the church. Simout, struck with the appearance of the ass, which seemed familiar to him, approached the young girl by whom it was led, and whose face was concealed by a large straw hat. The instinctive beatings of his heart had not deceived him ; it was Trudis. If we were writing a romance, what a scene we might here describe ! Our readers must imagine for themselves the joy of the poor maiden, who, though free, had never been able to enjoy the pleasures of liberty, because it had separated her from her betrothed, and the transports of the young man, who had found again the sole object of his affection, after God ; for his parents were no longer alive. The father of Trudis, on gaining his freedom, had hired the fine garden of the Borgendal, at a rent which was sufficiently light to him, who was both active and skilful ; and he was now a man in easy and improving circumstances.

Simout felt that it was vain to offer himself as his son-in-law until he also should have gained his freedom. But as Trudis had promised to await the time necessary for the accomplishment of that object—and he knew that she would keep her word,—he kept up his courage and spirits, and determined to leave no stone unturned in order to procure the long-desired privilege. Some time passed in this way ; the lovers seeing each other every fortnight, and both indulging in pleasing hopes and anticipations for the future, though without seeing any immediate prospect of success.

At last Simout thought of an expedient, which he immediately proceeded to carry out. One day, meeting with Matthieu de Warick, whose custom was to visit the works every three months, he accosted him respectfully.

"Sire," said he, "may I be so bold as to ask a favour of you, which is, to sell me a portion of the land around this church, which still belongs to you ? You know that, out of the six days of the week on which we work, one is granted us for recreation, or to attend to our own private business. With the refuse of the materials of the building which the masters of the works cast aside, I should

employ these days in building myself a small house ; and after my engagement here is finished, I hope that, with the proceeds of my work, I shall be able to pay you."

Matthieu de Warick was pleased with the appearance and demeanour of Simout, and judging that his proposal was dictated by honourable intentions, granted his request with readiness.

"I will do what you wish with pleasure," he said : "tell me which portion you would prefer?"

"If your lordship leaves the choice to me, I shall take this," replied the workman, pointing out the part of the Place Saint Jean which is now between Hospital Street and the gate. "It has the sun upon it," he added.

"And how many feet of ground do you desire?"

"I should like 3,000 square feet, if you will permit me so much."

"Ah, then," replied De Warick, "you wish to build a palace ; or perhaps you covet a little garden with your house. Well, 3,000 feet. I have sold a similar allotment lower down at a sou the square foot ; this then will be a sum of 3,000 sous. During the five years which I judge will be necessary for the completion of this church, I shall not ask for any rent ; but afterwards you will have to pay a sum of 200 sous a year, until your circumstances allow of your liquidating the entire debt. Will these conditions suit you?"

Simout having replied in the affirmative, at the same time warmly expressing his gratitude, Warick proceeded to trace out the limits of the ground, and, in the presence of the chaplain and some of the principal citizens, he explained the agreement, of which a note was immediately made on the spot. He added, that this was not meant to be a precedent for the future ; for though he had on this occasion desired to encourage a deserving young man, yet, as for the remainder of his lands, he had resolved to do nothing with them until the completion of the church.

Simout took possession of his property with great joy, divided it into six small portions, and set about building his little house in the first, leaving the five others vacant. When his companions saw him at work, the more intelli-

gent of them regretted that they had not thought of the same thing. This was precisely what he had foreseen. He parted with his remaining portions at two sous a foot, to five of his comrades, and thus found himself a creditor for 5,000 sous, while he was only debtor for 3,000. He was, as we see, a speculator !

Thus it was that the first six houses arose in the Place Saint Jean, and which, no doubt, had a very different appearance from those which have since replaced them. They were finished in 1131, at the same period as the completion of the church.

CHAPTER III.

It happened at this time that Innocent II. had come to the Low Countries, to be present at a council which was then sitting at Liége ; and as soon as it was known that the sovereign Pontiff had entered Brussels, great rejoicings took place among all classes of the people. The chapter of St. Gudule lodged the Holy Father and his suite in a house with four towers before the portico, at the corner of the Rue du Bois-Sauvage, and which communicated with the cemetery by a wooden bridge thrown across the street. This house was still standing in 1703. The eloquent and pious abbot of Cluny, Bernard, whose name has since been placed in the calendar,—Bernard, the light and glory of his age, accompanied Innocent II., as also the cardinals d'Ostia and Albano, the archbishop of Rouen, the bishops of Arras, Verdun, Châlons, and many other prelates.

Godfrey the Bearded hastened to render homage to the Pope, and took the opportunity of asking him to be pleased to consecrate the new church, which had just been finished so propitiously. Innocent signified his willingness to comply with the request, and everything was accordingly prepared for the ceremony. It was in the beginning of October, 1131,—the 5th according to some documents, the 15th according to others. All the vassals

of the noble duke came to assist at the inauguration, so glorious for Brussels, and at the same time so unexpected. Gerard de Grimberghe, who was there, at once recognised Simout, and seven other serfs of his domains, and he immediately claimed them as his property, notwithstanding the privilege of the asylum. The abbot of Cluny replied :

"We might easily," said he, "withdraw from you these workmen of the Lord, who have deserved so well by their labours in this holy cause. It would only be necessary to place upon their shoulders the holy sign which they are so worthy to bear ; but we prefer paying their ransom."

"I shall reduce it then," said Gerard, "to one mark of silver a head."

"There shall go out no slaves from the presence of the father of the faithful," added Bernard ; then addressing himself to the brilliant assembly, he continued, "Let not those who know the price of liberty forget that the serfs whom they are going to redeem are their brethren ;" and with these words he proceeded to collect upon a silver salver the offerings of the company, which proved so abundant, that the amount far exceeded the sum required for the ransom of the serfs. The latter, led by one of the cardinals to the throne of the Pontiff, had knelt down during the collection. Innocent II. then rose in his turn, and solemnly extending his hands, said, "Let the gifts of Heaven and the favour of God descend, and rest upon those who have restored these men to freedom."

On hearing these words, Gerard de Grimberghe approached, and said, in a voice of emotion,

"I declare before God and before all, that I grant full liberty to these men, who henceforth belong not to me ; and I desire that the part of the collection which pertains to me shall be bestowed upon them," as a recompense for their past labours and sufferings.

This noble and generous speech was received with acclamation ; and after these happy events were over, the ceremonies of the consecration proceeded. At their close, a sumptuous feast was prepared for the Pontiff, his suite,

and the dukes and lords, at the "Halle au Pain." As soon as night came on, the façade of the Broothings (House of Bread) was illuminated ; the lake which then covered the space where the Grande Place now stands, reflected innumerable lights ; and everywhere the townspeople showed their exultation by bonfires, songs, and shouts of joy.

Simout being now possessor of a mark of silver, besides his house and his freedom, lost no time in seeking the gardener of the Borgendal, and claiming the hand of his daughter. The faithful Trudis had waited for him ; the old man no longer objected, and the marriage was celebrated with great rejoicings in the new church, which had just been so auspiciously dedicated.

After all the festivities connected with the consecration were over, and the visitors had taken their departure, Matthieu de Warick sold all his lands, which were rapidly covered with streets and buildings ; among which were the Rue de Marais, the Marché aux Fromages, the Rue des Chandeliers, the Rue de la Violette, the Place Saint-Jean, and the lower part of the Rue de l'Hôpital.

Godfrey the Bearded asked him whether these gifts which he had made had much diminished his fortune.

"On the contrary," replied he, "they have doubled it : my lands, which were worth a sou an ell, have been sold, with the exception of the two lots which I gave four years ago, at the rate of a shilling a foot ; and the worthy Simout, who pretends that I have been his benefactor, prospers wonderfully with his wife, whom he calls Trudis, but whom, as I have told him, he would do just as well to call Gertrude. No, no, sire, generosity impoverishes no one."



The Chapel of the Brigands.

"I know why they hide."—*Goethe.*

AFTER quitting Fauquemont, on the old road from Maëstricht to Aix-la-Chapelle, the traveller perceives to the left the pointed steeple of Heeck, surmounted by a cross. Passing by Chimnon, a little farther on, and then leaving the high road and descending into the valley where the river Geleen meanders along, you enter a wood, where stand the remains of an old mansion, near the cross erected by the side of the pathway from Hoensbrock to Vacsraedt.

These remains, of which you can see but little, on account of the moss and bushes which cover them, are those of the castle of Scheurenhof, inhabited, in 1772, by the only remaining representatives of an old family,—the lord of Scheurenhof and his daughter. The old knight lived in the most profound solitude, and was but rarely seen by the inhabitants. Matilda, his daughter, was just eighteen years of age, and was distinguished for her beauty no less than for the sweetness of her character and the affectionate care with which she devoted herself to cheer and console the declining days of her aged parent.

It was not the infirmities of age alone, however, that pressed upon the old knight; something of more immediate consequence, both to himself and his neighbours, alarmed him; it was nothing less, in fact, than the report of the approach of a band of determined brigands who had infested that part of Limbourg, and had extended their depredations over the wide extent comprised between Aix-la-Chapelle, Maëstricht, Ruremond, and Wassemborg. These men had secret confederates in all the villages, hamlets, and boroughs throughout that territory, and were known to each other by a pass-word, and a card marked with a hieroglyphical sign. During the day they

worked in the fields, and drank in taverns (for they never lacked money), and in the evening they all assembled at the sound of a whistle, issuing from the depth of a thicket, or from the dreary solitude of a heath. Whenever this ominous sound was heard, it spread terror everywhere around: the boldest men shuddered; farmers trembled for their flocks and barns; churches and monasteries were alarmed at the prospect of sack and pillage; castellans watched anxiously from their loopholes; and the exclamation often passed from mouth to mouth—"Misfortune; the '*Boucs*' are coming!"

And the bandits went forth fully armed, and with masks on their faces, to the work of destruction, stripping farms, robbing castles, plundering churches, and sometimes even setting them on fire, and leaving them a heap of ruins. By the morning they had all disappeared; each one had thrown off his mask and resumed his day's work, whilst the fires were yet smouldering, and the victims of their robberies and depredations, if they still survived, were lamenting the destruction of their fortunes and property.

The number of these nocturnal expeditions multiplying on all sides, and often on the same night, gave rise to strange stories among the people. Some said that the banditti possessed the power of transporting themselves from one province to another, and that a secret compact with the devil had placed at their command a demon, who, under the form of a goat, carried them on his back through the air. From this popular belief, as well as from another circumstance about to be mentioned, arose the singular appellation bestowed upon the robbers, of "*Boucs*" (goats).

The first beginning of this secret society may be attributed to a few isolated depredations committed with success, and afterwards carried on upon a regular system; but later on, when the number of the "*Boucs*" increased so much as to inspire the republic of the United Provinces with serious alarm, it began to be suspected, from their extensive ramifications and mysterious plans, that the information extracted by the judges from the brigands

who now and then fell into the hands of justice, was far from being the whole truth. People even went so far as to say that Frederick the Great, with a view of facilitating his conquests in Germany, and of possessing himself the more easily of the United Provinces, had countenanced these bandits, and that the initiation of adepts into the confederacies was conducted after a form invented by D'Alembert, whose philosophical opinions had already begun to be looked upon with favour. The following is said to have been the mode of initiation :—

In a solitary chapel buried in the depth of a wood, a little lamp was lighted at midnight. The adept was conducted by two companions, or "sponsors," into this wood, and the door of the chapel being opened, he was made to go round the building three times on all fours, after which he entered it backwards, having first taken a copious draught of strong liquor. Two brigands, muffled up in cabalistic dresses, concluded the compact with him, and received his oath; upon which he was hoisted up on a wooden goat placed at the top of a pivot. The candidate being seated, the goat was put in motion, and kept continually turning until the poor man, whose brain was already affected by the drink, became more and more intoxicated. He became half-mad; he writhed about on his seat; the perspiration ran down his forehead; until at last he believed himself riding on a demon through the air. When he had turned round and round till he was quite senseless, and could bear it no longer, they took him down: he was now a "Bouc,"—an incendiary, a thief, a bandit, an assassin,—an accomplice in all their crimes.

These details may account for many of the stories still circulated about the witches and their Sabbath. But if these brigands spread terror abroad, justice did not remain inactive. It was in the country of Rolduc that the first pursuit commenced. The lordship of Fauquemont, the manor of Montfort, and all the territory of Juliers, were covered with wheels of torture, gibbets, and stakes. Two gallows were erected in Heelan. The lordships of Schoesberg, Nœnsbrock, Uback, Nuth, and nearly every village, caused at least one to be raised; but the more

they burned, the more they hung and quartered, the more formidable did the "Boucs" become by their numbers and by their audacity. In this way victory hung between crime and justice for a period of nearly twenty years.

Whoever inspects, as we have done, the formidable registers of the different justices in Limbourg who were engaged in the prosecution of the brigands, will be amazed at the enormous number of the criminals who, guilty or not guilty (for justice was sometimes deceived), perished in the above space of time. In the register of the tribunal of Fauquemont alone we have counted upwards of four hundred persons hung and quartered in two years, from 1772 to 1774.

One day the old chaplain of Scheurenhof entered the hall.

"Do you bring us bad news, father?" exclaimed the knight.

"Truly it is difficult to hope for any other," replied the priest. "Last night the fire broke out under the roofs of Bingelraedt; the scourge will spread; in three days it will reach Schinveldt, in six days Nuenhagen."

Saying these words, the old man bent his eyes sadly on the ground. At this moment the light of day became obscured by heavy volumes of smoke, which covered the whole sky. Matilda, who was at the window, opened it suddenly, and screamed, "Fire! Fire!"

The old man jumped from his seat. "Fire! did you say? Where? in what quarter?"

"From the side of Heghan," she replied, in great distress.

"It is nothing," said the chaplain, coldly.

These words caused a tear to roll down the cheeks of the young maiden. She shuddered at the thought that perhaps one dear to her would fall beneath the pitiless axes of the brigands.

The little castle of Heghan, which lay to east of Scheurenhof, was inhabited by a family who had been for a long period at enmity with the family of Scheurenhof. Notwithstanding the lapse of time and the close proximity

of the two castles, a circumstance which of itself would naturally have suggested an interchange of friendly relations, nothing could subdue the inveterate hatred which subsisted between the two houses, and which seemed only to increase as time went on.

But if this determined feud existed between the heads of the two castles, there was, nevertheless, a secret and hidden tie which united them ;—the knight's daughter Matilda was loved by young Walter de Heghan. Little, however, did the old knight of Scheurenhof dream of giving Walter the title of son-in-law ; while, on his part, the lord of the manor of Heghan thought as little of his son giving, one day, the title of spouse to Matilda.

In spite of the enmity existing between the respective fathers, neither the son nor the daughter relinquished the hope of a future union with each other ; and it was the fear of Walter's danger which made the heiress of Scheurenhof shed tears when she perceived the fire in the direction of his paternal abode.

" You have, of course, already taken your own measures ? " asked the chaplain, turning towards the knight of Scheurenhof.

" My walls are still sufficiently strong to repel the first attack," replied he.

Scarcely had the knight uttered these words, when one of the servants of the house entered the room in a state of great alarm.

" Well, Job, what mean all these terrified looks ? " asked his master.

" Sir, the men of the village desire to speak to you."

" Who is at their head ? "

" The magistrate of Hoensbrock."

" Let them enter."

When the inhabitants of Hoensbrock found themselves in the presence of the old knight, the magistrate addressed him thus :—

" Noble sir, we come to offer you our services at this time of danger. You have always been charitable and good towards us, and it is right that we should show ourselves grateful."

The countenance of the old man brightened up at these words ; he cast a rapid glance on the brave men who had come to defend him, and shook hands with them all, as if they were old friends ; but he suddenly stopped short in astonishment, on perceiving a figure half-hidden in one of the darkest corners of the room. He was a well-built young man, with a sunburnt countenance, and muscular arms, which might have rooted up a tree from the ground ; while the glance of his eye betrayed a character both clever and daring. "Martin," exclaimed the knight, "how is it I see you here among my friends ?"

"Sir," replied the other, without showing the least surprise, "I have only been the enemy of your game ; because I am of opinion that God has not made any one master of the creatures who live in the waters, the air, or the forest, and that he has given the hare of the plain, the bird of the air, and the fish of the stream, no less to the servant than to the lord. You, sir, are not of the same opinion, and more than once you have proved it by the severity of your punishment ; but you never acted towards me with inhumanity, or went beyond what the laws of the forest authorized. I am grateful to you, therefore, and my arm is at your service."

The old man could with difficulty restrain the emotion which he felt ; he turned towards the others and said :—

"My friends, I have only two wishes : the first is, the safety of my daughter ; the second, that Heaven will grant me time to recompense your loyalty. Your services I cannot accept, because you have yourselves houses, wives, and children to defend. If these brigands knew you were here, they would set fire to your dwellings, devastate your fields, and reduce you to misery. You, Martin, alone, will remain ; for you have nothing to lose. I appoint you, from this time, my head gamekeeper. You will doubtless acquit yourself well of the charge, for no one knows better than you all the intricacies of my woods. As for you, my friends, you will go back to your own homes."

Saying these words, he held out his hand to the magis-

trate and his companions, who took their departure with regret.

As soon as they had reached the end of the path which leads to Hoensbroek, they perceived a horseman moving past them, though the darkness of the night made it impossible to recognise him.

"Who goes there?" exclaimed the magistrate.

"A friend!" replied an unknown voice.

The horseman had already reached the summit of the hill, and presently the clatter of his horse's hoofs ceased at the gate of Scheurenhof.

A few moments after, the handle of a sword was heard to strike loudly at the castle-door.

"Who knocks?" exclaimed Martin, hastily seizing a fowling-piece of his master's.

"A friend, who wishes to speak with the lord of Scheurenhof," replied the same voice which had answered the villagers of Hoensbroek.

The door opened, and the stranger entered, while Martin, presenting his gun towards him, said, "Come forward to this lantern, that I may see you; and let me know what you want."

"I have already told you I wish to speak with your master."

"Who are you?"

"Your master will know me."

Martin lowered his weapon, for he now recognised the stranger.

"Oh! it is you, sir," he said, in a tone of surprise; "follow me;" and they both made their way towards the room where the lord of Scheurenhof, his daughter, and chaplain were watching the flames, which were by this time gradually expiring.

"Wait here till I announce you," said Martin to his companion. At these words he opened the door of the room, and said in a loud voice, "Sir Walter de Heghan!"

"Walter!" exclaimed Matilda, with indescribable emotion.

"De Heghan!" said the old knight, in an emphatic tone. The young man advanced with a firm step.

"Sir," said he, "I am no longer the son of your enemy ; the fire has driven me from my house and made me an orphan. My father and mother are both dead, and all my family have fallen. I have no longer a roof to shelter me, and I come to beg a refuge with you."

"Young man," replied the knight, "hospitality is an old custom of our race ; let past enmities be forgotten ; henceforth let my house be yours." Then, recollecting himself, he added, "I am offering you an asylum ; but, alas ! to-morrow, perhaps, it may no longer be ours."

"Sir, if my heart is strong, my sword is strong also," replied the brave young man.

The old man was just on the point of asking Walter to partake of their supper, when Martin reappeared, and walked quickly up to the castellan, casting on Heghan a look of suspicion.

"What do you want, Martin ?" asked the old man.

"I have something to tell you, sir."

"Speak out. This gentleman is my friend and my guest : he may know everything that interests us."

"Well, then," answered Martin, "my good angel inspired me, some time ago, to go outside the door and listen to what was passing without ; and I had not been long there, when I espied, near to the gate, Jean le Bancal, the fiddler, who frequents all the taverns around, and is to be seen at every village feast. He knew me at once, for we have met oftener at the public-houses than in the churches ; and as he took it for granted I was your enemy, he asked me if I could assist him in exploring the castle, and preparing the means for letting it fall into the hands of the brigands."

"Ah ! they shall not catch me like a rat in a trap !" exclaimed the old lord. "I feel my strength quite restored ! They shall feel the weight of my arm, if my sword is well sharpened, and if my carbines are true to their aim ! Is this man you speak of gone ?"

"No, sir ; I pretended to enter into his project, and I have caught him like a fox in a snare."

"Let him be hung at once, on the highest tower of the castle !"

"But, for the present, do you not think it would be more prudent to confine him in one of the dungeons? Once in our power, we can do with him at any time as we please."

"You are right," said the lord of Scheurenhof: "in our circumstances prudence is better than rashness. This, I think, will be our best course. You, Martin, will pretend to enter into the views of the spy; you will leave the castle together, and conduct him secretly into the wood of Calvary, telling him at the same time that a troop of armed men are coming to our succour to-night. While you are posted in the wood, our men, mounted on horseback, will pass along by the wood, and return to the manor; and thus the spy will make the bandits believe that our defenders have really arrived."

This *ruse* was immediately executed, and proved successful. Before twelve o'clock had sounded, the rumour had circulated among the brigands that a troop of soldiers had arrived at Scheurenhof.

"A numerous band of horsemen are just gone to the castle," said Jean le Bancal, "fully armed, and ready to cut us to pieces!"

"How many did you count?" asked the captain.

"Oh, a great number," replied the fiddler: "it was so dark that I could not tell exactly; but I saw their arms shining, and heard their horses neighing, as after a long journey."

The recital of Bancal, and the confident tone in which he spoke, convinced the bandits that the castle had just received a garrison capable of sustaining a vigorous defence.

The captain was the only one who doubted the words of the fiddler.

"Jean," said he, "you have seen and heard; but you have forgotten to count how many there were. You were no doubt drunk, and your eyes saw the number double, triple, or even tenfold: at all events, we will try another plan. Four men will go to Scheurenhof, and demand the surrender of the place; fifty men—you, Peter the Devil, and your band—will accompany them, in order to protect them

against attack. You will halt in the wood of Calvary, and there await the return of the deputies."

The chief having made choice of his four messengers, and given them the necessary instructions, Peter the Devil also assembled his men, and the troop set off for the castle.

Leaving the remainder of their party, the deputies soon arrived at the drawbridge, where they made known their presence by a sharp whistle. Martin passed the mouth of his piece through a loophole of the wall.

"Shall I fire?" said he to his master; but, without waiting for an answer, he discharged its contents. The ball grazed the ear of one of the four brigands.

"Treachery!" exclaimed they all at once.

"Back, Martin!" shouted the castellan; then, turning to the deputies, he said:—

"It is only a mistake, companions: we will open the gate to you; and, on the honour of a gentleman, you shall leave the castle again safe and sound."

Upon this the drawbridge was lowered; the door opened, and the messenger of the "Boncs" entered.

"What is it you want?" asked the knight.

"Two things," replied one of them.

"The first?"

"That you surrender all the firearms you have in your possession," answered the bandit.

"The second?"

"That you give up all the money that is in the castle."

"Go back and say to those who sent you that they may come and take the money and arms if they can," replied the lord of Scheurenhof.

The door opened again, the deputies took their leave, and the drawbridge was drawn up after them. Martin placed himself before the loophole, in which he again placed his loaded piece, saying, "Shall I fire, sir?"

"No, Martin: remember, these are not hares; they are men who are under my safe-conduct, on the honour of a gentleman."

The poacher made no reply, but reluctantly withdrew his musket, just as it was about to go off.

The position of the knight, however, was evidently a dangerous one, and he prepared for a vigorous defence. The domestics were armed with guns and flails, and placed near to the door, the walls of the castle being secured by their height from the attacks of the bandits. This done, the dungeons were opened, as well as the subterraneous passage leading from the castle to the banks of the river Geleen, which offered a secure means of escape, in case of the castle being taken.

Two hours had scarcely elapsed, when Scheurenhof was surrounded by a multitude of brigands. Nothing was now heard but the clash of arms, signals by whistles given and answered, and the sound of voices issuing orders from rank to rank. The greater part of the troop had reached the drawbridge.

"Forward!" exclaimed the captain. The bandits advanced, while at the same instant a tremendous volley was poured from all the loopholes of the castle, which had remained until then in profound silence.

"Well aimed, Martin," said the castellan, on seeing the chief of the assailants stagger, as a ball struck him on the breast. The bandit turned round, raised his sword aloft in the air, and fell back into the arms of his followers, muttering, in a hoarse voice, "Forward!"

The brigands hesitated for a moment. A second discharge lit up the loopholes, and six men were laid prostrate by the side of the captain. The confusion now increased, and a loud cry of vengeance burst forth immediately from the exasperated troop, as they rushed forward with incredible fury, the shot from the castle meanwhile falling like hailstones upon their dense and compact body, and doing fearful execution. A party of the brigands, who had descended into the fosse, now drew themselves up to the bridge by means of ropes, and worked hard to break asunder the chains which held it. After a short time, the drawbridge, struck by a tremendous blow from an iron bar, fell with great noise; the gate quivered under the blows; each stroke re-echoed through the whole fortress, and mingled its hoarse sounds with the clash of arms and the imprecations of the troop. At last

the gate fell, wrenched from its hinges, and the whole band threw themselves under the archway.

All at once a terrible explosion burst forth, and shook the walls of the castle to their foundation. It was the work of a moment : all was again silent and dark, and nothing was heard save the cries of the wounded and dying.

Suddenly these groans were drowned in a universal shout of "Victory ! victory !"

The bandits rushed in, stumbling over not less than forty corpses of their men, whom the explosion of the mine under the gate had destroyed ; but not a gun was now heard, nor a single person to be seen, to impede their progress. Peter the Devil, now first in command, suspecting there was another mine under-ground, which might immediately explode, exclaimed,—

"Do not advance too quickly, companions ; let us be on our guard."

"Come forward, and fear nothing, if you be not cowards," replied a voice, which was that of Walter de Heghan.

"Now, my men, to the attack," answered Peter the Devil.

Immediately the bandits formed a large circle round the young man, who had remained on the threshold of the castle, attempting to defend the entrance.

A tremendous struggle ensued. *The vigorous arms of Walter brandished his formidable sword, which seemed to multiply itself, and form as it were an iron wheel around him. Meanwhile the circle began to get smaller and smaller, until at last they had completely hemmed him in, while a shout of joy was heard : "He is taken !"

They threw him on the ground : ten axes, ten swords, were raised above him ; ten guns were pointed at his breast.

"Stop !" exclaimed the captain, pushing back the brigands : "this man must not die like a brave soldier."

"Hang him on the drawbridge," said Jean le Bancal.

"Throw him into the Geleen," cried another.

"I know a better way than that," added Peter the Devil: "let some one go and fetch a horse, and some of the ropes that helped us up to the bridge."

Not a moment was lost: De Heghan was thrown across the horse; the robbers bound him tightly, hand and foot; then, after flogging the poor animal for some time with the end of the ropes, they let him loose.

The horse and its rider having disappeared, the Boucs commenced searching the castle. They smashed the doors, broke all the furniture, and examined every nook and corner; but neither man nor money could be found.

"This is astonishing," exclaimed the chief; "how can they have escaped?"

"I saw at the eastern turret a rope ladder fastened to the wall, and which was lowered into the trench," said one of the troopers.

"They have escaped by that, no doubt, and are already on the road to Amstenraedt," said Jean le Bancal.

"We will overtake them, however," continued Peter the Devil. And accordingly, the brigands took the route with all haste to Amstenraedt.

We will now retrace our steps a little while, and relate how the castellan and his followers effected their escape.

After having given the signal for the explosion, the lord of Scheurenhof and his people withdrew to the subterraneous passage which led to the bank of the river, Walter having refused to follow them, in order to cover their retreat. A rope ladder was then placed at the eastern turret, in order to mislead the brigands, and make them suppose that the fugitives had escaped in that direction. Meanwhile the castellan and his followers proceeded through the vaulted passage, lighted by a dark-lantern carried before them by Martin.

Arrived at the outlet, in the midst of a dense thicket, Martin covered his lantern, and they saw over their heads the dark sky partially illuminated by a few twinkling stars, while the tramp of the brigands, as they proceeded on their way towards Amstenraedt, sounded fainter and fainter in their ears, until it died away finally in the distance. Scarcely had the lord of

Scheurenhof stepped out a little way from the subterraneous vault, than he drew back affrighted, and Matilda uttered a scream. A strange noise was heard in the thicket, like that of the plunging and snorting of a frightened horse. This became every moment more and more distinct; branches were heard crashing, and leaves rustling, mingled with the sound of stifled neighings: at the same time something heavy fell at the feet of the young girl.

"Walter de Hoghan!" she exclaimed.

It was in fact he; and, though much lacerated by the ropes with which he had been fastened to the horse, safe and well. A joyful tear rolled down the cheek of the young maiden, and all hastened to unloose the knots which still fastened him.

"How comes it that you are thus bound?" asked the old knight, when he had recovered from his astonishment.

"I will tell you presently," replied the young man: "let us first think of our safety. I know the miller of Hulebrock, who lives near: we shall there find horses which will enable us to proceed to Ghent, and from thence we can reach the Meuse." And without waiting for a reply, he marched forward at the head of the troop.

Leaving the village of Heeck to their left, they descended into a narrow ravine towards the tower of Saint Peter; but they had not proceeded far before Martin, who acted as guide, stopped abruptly, and said in a low voice, "Halt!" All paused in a moment, for they knew that the gamekeeper, like the fallow-deer, instinctively scented from afar the approach of danger.

Having ascertained the direction from whence the sounds proceeded, the gamekeeper slung his gun over his shoulder, and began to climb the sides of the ravine. Without disturbing a pebble or a bush, he attained, with the dexterity of a cat, the summit of the ridge, and looked around him, listening at the same time with all his ears. He soon discovered what the noise was, for he saw at a distance the ominous little lamp, which was only employed

on the darkest nights to give light to the ceremony of the initiation of a new brigand.

Martin leant over the side of the ravine, and made signs to the fugitives to proceed with caution. "Advance as quietly as you possibly can," said he, in a low voice; "we are here in a most dangerous position; we are close to the chapel of the Boucs."

The little company descended the ravine in the greatest silence, and passing to their left the houses of Ooste, they entered Fauquemont after a march of half an hour.

"Thank Heaven! we are safe," exclaimed the lord of Scheurenhof.

Martin meanwhile had retraced his steps, and was making his way with great caution through bushes and high grass; and at last he reached the entrance of the chapel, near which he hid himself, in order to witness the mysteries of the initiation which, was about to take place. Before the altar stood Abraham Nathan, the famous Jew who played so terrible a part in the history of this period. He was clothed in a sort of mock chasuble, embroidered with gold, and was receiving the oath of a poor cowkeeper, whom they were on the point of taking down from the wooden goat.

"You deny God?" demanded the Jew.

"Yes," replied the peasant, in a choking voice.

"The Virgin and the saints?"

"Yes—the Virgin and the saints."

"You consent to give your soul to the devil, that he may give you in exchange the goods of the earth,—gold, riches, and power?"

"Yes."

"Well, in the name of Satan, I accept your soul at this price," said Nathan; "and now you are one of us. Here is the card by which you will recognise your associates." And putting in his hand the ticket marked with the hieroglyphic of the band, the Jew gave him the fraternal embrace, and said to him, "Remember this evening."

"That shall never be," said Martin to himself.

Passing the barrel of his gun between the branches of

a bush behind which he had concealed himself, he took his aim at Nathan, who was leaning forwards towards the novice, and giving him at that moment the kiss of initiation.

In an instant the gun went off, and the ball pierced the skull of the newly initiated, striking at the same time the right arm of the Jew. A fearful cry resounded through the chapel—"Treachery! treachery!"

The new brigand rolled on the steps of the altar, writhed in agony for a moment, and then breathed his last. The Jew raised his bloodstained arm, and addressing his two companions as he pointed to the dead man, said—

"Brothers, avenge me, and avenge this man!"

The two sponsors took up their guns and left the chapel, directing their weapons towards the place where they had perceived the flash of the gamekeeper's piece. Their two balls were fired at once.

"Badly aimed, my friends," exclaimed Martin, who had reloaded his double-barrelled gun, and was prepared with two shots for his adversaries. He fired the first, and one of the men fell; the second shot followed instantaneously, and the other fell also. There now only remained Nathan, who fled through the thickest of the wood, and disappeared in the darkness.

Martin entered Fauquemont at the dawn of day, and informed the magistrate of what had passed. He repaired with a strong escort to the chapel, where nothing was found but the two dead bodies, which were ordered to be ignominiously interred by the executioner under the gallows. Nathan was arrested fifteen days afterwards, and hanged on the 24th of September, 1772, upon the heath of Groed.

In spite of the increased severity of the judges, the numerous proclamations posted up by the nobles and powerful lords of the United Provinces, and the active measures adopted by the bishops of Liège, the brigands were still not entirely exterminated.

Some contemporary writers carry back the origin of the association of the "Boucs" to the year 1736, about

the same time that the Lodges were organized in Paris. Their suppression was not accomplished until the year 1779. Many notorious characters figured among them as chiefs; principally the famous surgeon of K——, of the country of Rolduc; the Jew Abraham Nathan; Hermann L——; and Antony B——, surnamed Le Moxe. The society possessed even a chaplain, who inculcated crime as a principle, and who bore the name of Leopold L——. The desecrated chapels where the initiations generally took place were those of Sainte Rose, near Sittard; Saint Leonard, near Rolduc; and of Urmon, on the Meuse; places still held in awe by the peasantry in those neighbourhoods.

Shortly after the events detailed in this story, Matilda of Scheurenhof and Walter de Heghan were united in marriage, and their family long continued to enjoy the esteem and veneration of the country around. The attack on the castle of Scheurenhof, the escape of its inmates, and other tales of the times of the Boucs, form to this day the fireside entertainment of the worthy villagers of the district during the long nights of winter.*

* Those who desire to know more of the history of the society of the "Bouc" brigands, may consult a contemporary work published at Maëstricht, and which bears the following title: "Origin, Causes, Proofs, and Discoveries of an Impious Band of Robbers existing in the Country of the Meuse, and other adjacent Places, with an exact Account of the Fugitives and the Victims of Justice. By S. P. Slemada."



The Three Judgments of the Count of Flanders.

. "His might
Put down the wrong, and aye upheld the right."
Curse of Kehama.

INTRODUCTION.

BALDWIN VII. was the son of Robert of Jerusalem, and succeeded to the dignity of count of Flanders in the year of our Lord 1111, being then but eighteen years of age. He was called *Badouin-à-la-Hache*, or Baldwin of the Axe, because he always carried at his side an immense battle-axe, with which he was accustomed to execute prompt justice upon all offenders. He lived, indeed, at a time when such severity seemed more than ever called for. Law and equity were utterly set at nought; the poor were oppressed and pillaged by the rich lords, and the knights, who were in the habit of robbing passengers on the highways, and living in every species of crime, knew no other law than their own savage will. Baldwin was a noble-minded and generous prince, and he determined upon making a vigorous effort to put an end, in his hereditary states, to the evils which were crushing the people. To this end he convoked a meeting of all the nobles whose lord paramount he was, laid down many wholesome regulations, and, brandishing his battle-axe, he ended by saying, "By the memory of my father, peace shall be maintained: to me let the orphan and the widow, and all who need justice and redress, apply."

The lords parted from the count, well persuaded that they had met with a severe overseer of their actions; and thus it happened that for some months the oppressions were less heavy, the exactions became more moderate, and the good people, who were able at last to breathe freely, blessed Baldwin of the Axe.

The powerful men whom the count kept in awe had several times tried to induce him, by cunning insinuations, to set out like his father and gather laurels in Palestine;

but Baldwin, judging his presence too necessary in Flanders, satisfied himself with sending to the help of the Crusaders his cousin Charles of Denmark, and with him some knights who had crimes to expiate, and on whom he imposed this pilgrimage as a penance.

Many tales are related of the terrible justice of Baldwin of the Axe. We will select three specimens, which we think will interest our readers.

I.

THE BETROTHED.

"MATTHIAS BROUER is a powerful man, my child ; you will do well to beware of him : in a time like ours, and a place like Ghent, one is not count and lord of the waters for nothing. He manages our rivers and streams, inspects our dikes, opens or shuts our sluices, stops or sets a-going our mills, decides upon alluvions, and, in short, continues or suspends our navigation. The watergrave, I say, is a powerful man, and our lord Count Baldwin gave this important function to Master Brouer, because he saw in him a firm and determined character."

"Let him be as determined as he likes," replied Brico Coppens, the young cattle-dealer, "provided he be just. Count Baldwin, too, is a man of unshaken firmness, but no one can complain of his justice ; instead of which this watergrave——"

"Remember," resumed the first speaker, an honest brewer of Ghent, "he is one of the great officers of Flanders."

"What of that ? The count has shown us that he makes as much of the lowest of his subjects as the highest. I am determined to have justice."

"How will you obtain it ? The watergrave has appearances in his favour. You were in possession, on the right bank of the Lys, of two pieces of land : the Lys changes its bed, and carries off one of them from you, and Matthias Brouer takes it, in accordance with custom, which gives him a right to the alluvions."

"This is not an alluvion," rejoined Brice ; "the river has

changed its bed only because the watergrave, at the corner of a little field of his own, opposite to me, planted willows and stakes, which have turned the current. I claim in compensation for the new bed I furnish on my land, the old bed of the river : this is only fair. Then, again, the carrying off my betrothed, Melanie Ghierts, is the most abominable of crimes. Melanie goes with her boat to take up her sick father's nets ; she makes a mistake, and takes some pounds' weight of fish in the watergrave's preserves, and for this he shuts her up in prison ! He knows she is my betrothed, and as he sees she is so pretty, he wants to take her from me. Do you think I will suffer this ? Are the men of Ghent become slaves ? Does Count Baldwin no longer reign, or has his justice gone to sleep ?"

"But what then will you do ?" rejoined his friend.

"Do ? I will go and find the count. He has already put noblemen to death who had robbed the poor, and has always punished severely the exactions of the public officers."

"God and the saints be your help !" said the brewer.

Next day, the 5th of March, 1117, Brice Coppens set off for Deyuzo, where Count Baldwin of the Axe had just arrived from his castle of Wynendale, in order to put an end to some disorders.

On his arrival, he repaired to the house of the bailiff, where the count then was, and where he had just sat down to supper. Brice was nevertheless introduced ; for Baldwin was accessible at all times to the lowest of his subjects who asked for justice.

"What do you want, young man ?" said the count.

"Justice, sire," answered Brice Coppens.

"Sit down," resumed the count, pointing to a stool.

The young man obeyed, and proceeded to open his grievances. The prince listened to him attentively until he had finished his recital, after which he kept silence for some minutes. At last he said,—

"Certain reports have reached me already respecting this watergrave, Matthias Brouer. If what you say is true, punishment shall not long be delayed. To-morrow, at eleven o'clock, come to the door of the watergrave's house."

Brice Coppens made a sign of respectful assent, rose, and went back to his house. Next morning he was at the door of the watergrave's house at the hour appointed, when he saw arrive, on a powerful horse, a man who, at a distance, had the appearance of a young and good-looking farmer. There might be seen, however, under the folds of his cloak, a heavy battle-axe ; and Brice had no difficulty in recognising the count of Flanders. Baldwin alighted, and knocked at the watergrave's door. A domestic opened it ; on which the count drew from his purse a piece of silver, slipped it into the groom's hand, and said, "I am a stranger in the town, and wish to speak to your master on matter of urgent business in his department."

Two minutes after the domestic came back, and said that his master had just sat down to table, and at such times he would put himself out for nobody, whatever might be his business.

"Here are two silver pence," said the count ; "return to your master, and tell him I come from Gend-Hof ; that the dike of Baesrode is half burst ; that assistance must be sent directly, and that I can't wait."

The groom re-entered, encouraged by this liberality, but returned as quickly as before.

"My master answers," said he, "that the dike must have patience, and that if you teaze him any more, he will order the dogs to be let loose upon you."

"Ah, that is what he said, is it?" replied the count, coolly ; "here are three silver pence, for which I ask no more than this slight service. Just tell the watergrave that "*Pier-Jan-Claes* waits for him."

This name was no sooner pronounced to the watergrave, than he started up in confusion, and, as it were, out of his senses ; for the name of "*Pier-Jan-Claes*" was the secret name under which Baldwin announced himself to his officers when he arrived as a judge. He intrusted the keeping of his horse to the groom, and entered, accompanied by Brice, into the watergrave's house.

"I see," said he to him in a severe tone, "that the complaints made to me are well-founded. You have rendered

a bad account of the water-tolls ; the inundations, which have enriched you, have been sometimes caused by you in the mauagement of the sluices ; you have robbed orphans and widows, though you knew they were under my protection ; and you have added to your crimes by depriving this young man of his bride. Send at once, I command you, for the young girl whom you are retaining in prison by unjust violence."

"But, sire," answered the watergrave, trembling, "she has been guilty of a crime, and is therefore justly detained."

"A crime ! Some slight offence, which at most made her liable to a small fine. But we will hear what she has to say."

The servants now suspected, from the humbled demeanour of their master, that they had really before them the redoubtable Baldwin of the Axe ; and hastening to obey his orders, they speedily returned with the poor Melanie, who was carried, rather than brought, into the room—pale, exhausted, and drowned in tears. A ray of joy, however, shone in her eyes when she beheld her betrothed ; for she instinctively felt, from the appearance of the group around her, that the hour of her deliverance was at hand.

The count was much struck with the modesty and simple grace of the young maiden. "Speak, my child," said he to her, "without fear ; we will see justice done you : but tell us first what were the watergrave's proposals to you ?"

Melanie blushed deeply, cast her eyes on the ground, and, after a short pause, answered, "Sire, they were such as I dare not name."

"Ah, then they were guilty ones ! I suspected as much," said the count. Then, turning to the watergrave, he added, "What answer do you make, sir ?"

The unhappy Brûler fell on his knees at the count's feet, and entreated mercy. "I gave way," he said, "to sudden temptation. I am sorry for it," he added, "and am ready to make any reparation that your highness may command."

"You shall most certainly make reparation," replied the count sternly ; "all your property from this moment belongs to the young girl you have so cruelly used. Moreover, that your example may not be lost upon the people, I shall order your house to be razed to the ground, and a public way formed across what once was your manor. But all this does not dispense with personal punishment. Confess your sins for the last time, for justice is at hand." And with these words, he opened his doublet, drew a rope from under it, and handed it to the assistants, while a monk, who had been ordered to attend, came in to give spiritual aid to the unhappy criminal. In a few moments all was over ; the water-grave was hanged at his own door, and Baldwin had mounted his heavy charger and set off.

Brice and Melanie, in deep emotion, had not recovered themselves sufficiently to move, when Joseph Barth, just appointed watergrave in place of Matthias Brouer, arrived, and by the prince's orders put the young girl in possession of the property of the criminal. His house was then levelled, and a public way drawn across it, which has ever since been called "Watergrave Street."

A few days after, Brice and Melanie were married. The brewer came to congratulate them on their happiness, adding, at the same time, "The count of Flanders is just ; but he is terrible !"

II.

THE CHAMPIONS OF YPRES.

On the 15th of October, of the year 1116, in the great hall of Ypres, there stood in the recess of a window a robust man, six feet in height, with long chestnut hair, which fell down over his shoulders, an auburn beard carefully trimmed, a clear complexion, keen eyes, and a handsome but somewhat severe countenance. A battle-axe, weighing thirty pounds, was suspended from his leathern girdle.

The reader will have already recognised the count of

Flanders, the renowned Baldwin of the Axe, who was at this moment surveying from the window a gibbet, which had recently been erected. Before him knelt a young girl of about twenty years of age, with an engaging countenance, but all in tears. This was Helly Moreel, the daughter of a rich merchant of Ypres, who was supplicating the count for aid in a matter which deeply concerned her. Two rival lovers had been paying court to her; the one, Juste Goethals, a handsome generous young man, had won her heart; the other, André Boren, a little man of thirty years of age, disagreeable in his manner, and of immoral life, but full of pride on account of his great riches, had been endeavouring for a year to win the affections of Helly, though the pure and delicate heart of the young maiden had all along revolted against him.

The father of Helly, honest Paul Moreel, when applied to by Boren for his consent, replied, that he would have had him for his son-in-law if it had been his daughter's wish; but as she had already declared her partiality for another, he was not disposed to force her into compliance, and would leave her to follow her own inclinations. This answer put Boren into a passion, who, moreover, reproached his rival Goethals with having supplanted him in the affections of Helly by means of a magical charm; and at last ended by challenging him to a duel, according to the custom then prevailing in Flanders.

"Or, if you refuse to fight," said he, "you must clear yourself by the ordeal of fire, of the magical practices of which you are accused."

"Single combat," replied Goethals, "is the judgment of God, and I accept it."

The 18th of October was the day fixed for the combat, which was to take place in the court of the castle of Courtes, and it was decreed that the vanquished party should be hanged on the gibbet, which, as we have said, was to be seen from the window.

When Count Baldwin had heard the recital of the whole circumstances, he thought with himself, "There is only one of the parties in fault," and this ordeal

may not after all light upon the guilty party." He remembered, too, the frequent combats which desolated the town of Ypres, and the iniquitous results of the greater part of the ordeal fights, in which force alone constituted right, and for a few moments he was silent ; at last raising up the young maiden, he took her by the hand and said,—

"Take courage, my child, Juste Goethals shall be your husband."

The following day passed, and nothing occurred to confirm Count Baldwin's promise ; but the young girl did not lose her confidence. On the 17th of October, the prince's herald went through the streets of the city, proclaiming everywhere a special law or privilege accorded by Count Baldwin to the burgesses of Ypres. This law provided that, in order to prevent the abuses of capricious duels, no citizen should in future be entitled to challenge his adversary, whether to fight in the lists, or to the ordeal of fire, or otherwise, without being accompanied by five friends or champions, who should share with him the risks of the quarrel. The opposing party was required to bring an equal number of supporters.

This measure of course furnished a check to judicial fights ; for however foolish or enraged a man may be, he will not always find five others equally willing to run the risk of defeat, and that with the gibbet before their eyes.

As soon as Boren was made aware of this regulation of the count, he felt the greatest disappointment, for he knew that it would embarrass him considerably. The following day Juste Goethals, who was generally beloved, appeared before the hour appointed, with five friends. Boren, although the challenger, did not arrive : twelve o'clock struck, his name was called three times, and no answer being given, the companions of Juste congratulated him and departed to their homes. Some time after, however, Boren made his appearance with five armed men, and excused his delay, on the ground that the new regulation adopted by the count had not left him sufficient time to collect his friends.

"Every one is leaving," replied Goethals; "the hour is past, and my champions have departed."

"And you are glad of the excuse," said Boren, with a contemptuous sneer.

"If his highness the count of Flanders will permit it," answered Goethals, reddening with indignation, "I will make you eat your insolent words!"

"The laws are inviolable," said the count of Flanders, "and I myself must obey them. But you shall have back your champions." In a few moments Baldwin himself, and four of his bravest knights, stood by the side of Juste, who was confounded by so great an honour.

The companions of Boren were horrified; and knowing the extraordinary strength of the count, death appeared to them inevitable. After remaining for a few moments rooted to the ground, pale with terror, the five champions, as if actuated by one instinct, throw down their arms and took to flight.

"The challenger who deserts the lists is guilty," said Baldwin sternly; "let justice be done!" One of the knights seized the wretched Boren, carried him away to the foot of the gibbet, and hung him.

"Merciful heavens!" said the younger citizens of Ypres, deeply moved at this fearful sentence, "there will be no more fighting now."

"This is what we wish," said the count, while he took his way composedly to the castle.

Juste Goethals had been himself so much struck with this scene, that he remained for some time speechless. He then ran to the house of Helly, who did not expect such severe satisfaction, and could scarcely refrain from sighing over it. But these things are soon forgotten: a few days afterwards she was married to her betrothed, and in consequence of what had happened, for more than a year there was no public duel at Ypres, where, before the proclamation of Count Baldwin of the Axe, such scenes might be witnessed almost every day.



III.

JOHN OF OOSTCAMP.

IN the neighbourhood of Bruges, in the year 1114, dwelt John of Oostcamp, a baron who oppressed and pillaged unmercifully his vassals, and who was so avaricious and wicked, that he had become the terror of the whole neighbourhood. At the time of our story, he had purchased from a draper of Bruges a quantity of cloth and linen, for the use of his house ; and the worthy merchant, though he made repeated applications, was unable to obtain payment. This occasioned serious difficulties in his business, which preyed greatly upon his mind, and at last he died, leaving his widow to struggle on alone in the world. In order to liquidate the debts which her husband owed to the weavers of the town, the poor woman turned all her goods into money ; and having nothing left to depend upon but the sum due by John of Oostcamp, she went three times to that lord to demand payment : the baron as often refused her request, and three times she was driven contumeliously from his door.

The poor woman, after long considering what she should do, determined at last to apply to the count of Flanders, who was then at Bruges. Accordingly, she waited for him one morning at the gate of St. Donatus' church, where he went daily, and casting herself at his knees, laid her case before him. Baldwin, as he listened to her narrative, placed his hand mechanically on his terrible battle-axe ; but, recollecting himself, he merely said to her, in a tone of kindness,—

“ You will send this day one of the officers of justice to the castle of John of Oostcamp, and come and tell me to-morrow what answer he returns.”

The good woman took her leave ; but of all the officials established at Bruges for the purpose of executing justice, none could be found to perform this errand ;—such was their dread of John of Oostcamp. The merchant's widow,

therefore, returned next day to the gate of St. Donatus, and related to Baldwin how the matter stood.

"So," said the count, "they fear a man who does not fear the laws. I will send Ulryck, one of my serjeants ; and we shall see what the villain will say."

The noble count said a few words to a little man who was beside him, and then entered the church.

This man was a Fleming, somewhat less than the ordinary height, but with animated features, and with a keen and penetrating eye. Under the title of bailiff, he had the charge of executing the orders of the count, and in this capacity he now addressed the poor woman :—

"This man, then, refuses to pay you?" said he, in a compassionate tone.

"Yes, sir," replied the widow ; "and none of the officials of Bruges will venture to take a summons to him."

"I will go myself," replied Ulryck.

The grateful woman raised her eyes towards him with a thankful smile, and said, "Do you not dread, sir, the lord of Oostcamp? he is a powerful baron."

"Oh! I have nothing to fear," said Ulryck ; "I bear the rod of authority ; the battle-axe of the terrible count is embroidered on my coat, and he will respect me as an officer of his sovereign. Return to your house, my good woman. On my return from church I will execute this errand, and in three hours you shall have an account of the result."

Ulryck, as soon as he had left the church, went straight to the stables, saddled and bridled his little horse, took his ebony rod, at the end of which was carved a lion of silver, and set out for the castle of the baron.

Horses often possess in great perfection that quality which we call instinct, and which is sometimes of more value than reason. A horse, for instance, will stop at the entrance of a wood infested by wolves ; nor will anything induce him to pass through a forest in which he perceives the presence of a tiger. Minna (such was the name of Ulryck's little horse) was peculiarly endowed with the sense alluded to : the poor animal appeared to foresee

danger, if not for himself, at least for his master, to whom he was tenderly attached. His master repaid this tenderness with affection : he attended to Minna himself, both morning and evening ; and the beast, from habit, recognised him at a distance, saluted him with his neighings, turned round his head to see him, and cast down his ears with sadness when he left him. If the serjeant was absent, and a stranger came in his place to bring hay or oats, the horse appeared to be grieved, and could scarcely be induced to eat.

Minna sometimes had odd fancies : he would take one road in preference to another, even though it was farther round ; and Ulryck, who had never been able to overcome the obstinacy of his horse in these respects, had ended by letting him have his own way. "Minna knows what he is doing," said he ; "if he conducts me by one road, which is the longest, and so increases his labour, it is because he perceives there is danger in the other." It may be added, that on every occasion when the faithful Minna had refused to proceed, Ulryck had been exposed to some danger.

In the present case Minna showed more than usual restiveness ; when it was necessary, on leaving the town, to proceed along the road to the residence of John of Costcamp, the little animal came to a dead stop, and was so determined not to proceed farther, that Ulryck began at last to get angry : he did not wear spurs, which were at that time the distinctive mark of knighthood ; but he spoke to him in a threatening voice : he even gave him a blow, though not without much regret, with his rod of ebony. Minna, however, only held down his head : he could not be induced to advance a single step.

"Minna," said he, at last, speaking to the beast as if it could have understood him, "as we are proceeding by order of his highness the count of Flanders, and bear his black rod, we shall be respected."

Minna only answered by turning towards the town which they had just left. Upon this Ulryck dismounted. "Begone then, if you are afraid, poor Minna," said he

to his horse ; " for my part, I must do my duty." And he walked on.

The horse followed him with a downcast look, and his head bowed to the very earth. On arriving at the gate of the castle, the portcullis being down, Ulryck sounded the horn, which was fastened to a post. " Who are you ? " said the servitor who answered the summons.

" An officer of my lord Count Baldwin of Flanders."

The portcullis was instantly raised, and Ulryck entered the castle, followed by Minna, who remained in the courtyard. The man who had opened the portcullis conducted the serjeant to the great hall, where John of Oostcamp was seated. The apartment was forty feet in length, and twenty-five broad ; it had no other ceiling than the roof, which was composed of large tiles, supported by rough carpenter-work. A massive table stood in the centre, and around it rude benches of wood. The unplastered walls were covered with arms, nets, and skins of wolves. A knight's suit of armour stood at one end ; at the other, before a large chimney on a wooden stool, sat John of Oostcamp, attended by three men-at-arms. He wore a bonnet of hare-skin, pantaloons of green cloth, wooden shoes, and an over-coat of red woollen cloth, fastened by a black girdle, from which was suspended on one side a long knife, and on the other a battle-axe. A jug of beer and slices of bread stood before him on a wooden trencher. The floor of the hall, not being paved, was covered with straw. Under the table lay two large dogs, which growled at the approach of Ulryck, but were silenced by a word from their master. As soon as the officer appeared, John of Oostcamp presented to him the pot of beer, with a slice of bread, as was the custom at the time.

" Before I accept of anything," said Ulryck, " I must deliver my message."

" You are come on the part of Count Baldwin," said John of Oostcamp : " what is your business ? " •

" I come," replied the serjeant, " as a public summoner in behalf of his Highness Count Baldwin. No officer of the city having ventured to proceed against you for the

debt due by you to a certain merchant of Bruges, my lord the count of Flanders has directed me to apply to you."

"These things," said the castellan roughly, "are my affairs, not his."

"Everything pertaining to justice belongs to him," replied the officer; "and in the name of God, and of justice, and in behalf of Count Baldwin, I charge you to pay immediately into my hands the sum due, on pain of being condemned to prison until it be acquitted in full."

Before Ulryck had time to say more, the castellan rose in a passion, and with an oath fell upon the messenger, pushed him violently out of the room, and shut the door.

Ulryck, aware that he was fulfilling a severe duty, bore patiently this coarse treatment, and not wishing to return without having fulfilled his task, he replaced his rod of office in a small bag which hung from his horse's saddle; taking from it at the same time a pen and a sheet of parchment. He then wrote the summons, and before nailing it to the gate of John of Oostcamp, he read it in a distinct voice, calling, in the name of the most redoubted count of Flanders, upon all the vassals, servants, and retainers of the castle, to give their aid in apprehending the person of the said castellan, and placing him in the prison of the town, under pain of being treated as felons and rebels.

On seeing this, John of Oostcamp, beside himself with rage, rushed out with his battle-axe in his hand, and while the officer was in the act of fixing the summons on his gate, he dealt him a tremendous blow on the head.

Ulryck staggered under the fatal blow, and had only strength enough to drag himself to his horse, and place the parchment, all stained with blood, in the bag, when he fell down and expired.

The baron, his fury having subsided, ordered his servants to let down the portcullis, and to take Minna to his own stable; but the animal, as if he understood what was passing, suddenly sprang forward, and was out of the castle before the portcullis could be lowered. The gates were then shut; and in order that no traces of the

crime might remain, the servants of the castellan hastily made a grave, and buried the officer.

The horse, meanwhile, had returned to Bruges, and on arriving, stopped at the gate of the palace of the count. Baldwin was at dinner with some of his knights, when it was announced that Ulryck's horse had returned alone, carrying in the saddle-bag the rod of ebony, and a scroll of parchment stained with blood.

Baldwin at once arose, and before two hours had elapsed, he appeared at the gate of the castle, and was received by John of Oostcamp, who presented himself apparently quite composed and unconcerned.

"I come," said Baldwin, in a tone of severity, "to require of you Ulryck, my officer of justice."

"No officer of yours has been here," said the castellan, with effrontery; "your followers may inspect the whole castle."

"What!" exclaimed the count, "did not Ulryck come here to present this summons, and to require you to restore the property of the widow?"

John coolly took the parchment, and observing that it was stained with blood:

"This, no doubt, was intended for me," said he, calmly; "but you will remark, my lord, that it is stained with blood. It is probable, therefore, that Ulryck has been murdered by some villain on his way hither."

"And who would have dared to murder him, if not thyself?" replied Baldwin. "He bore with him the lion rod, and was under my safeguard. Knights, search the castle, and examine the servants and the people of the neighbourhood."

Whilst these orders were being executed, John of Oostcamp remained in the presence of his sovereign, continuing to excuse himself, protesting that he was about to pay the widow, and speaking with so much assurance, that Baldwin began almost to believe that he was innocent. The knights, moreover, had returned without having made any discovery.

Baldwin, perplexed at not being able to find any trace of the horrible deed, was about to withdraw, when, casting

a look at John of Oostcamp, he perceived that he had changed countenance, that a sudden pallor overspread his features, and that his eyes were fixed in horrible intensity on one particular corner of the court. Baldwin no sooner looked in that direction, than he observed Minna, whom he thought he had left at Bruges, but who had followed him unperceived, turning up with his fore-feet a portion of ground, which a nearer inspection showed had been recently dug. Suspicion being now aroused, orders were given to open the ground around this spot, and very soon the dead body of Ulryck was discovered.

John of Oostcamp, seeing that concealment was now vain, sought to make his escape; but finding this impossible, he fell upon his knees and begged forgiveness. Baldwin, as may be supposed, was inexorable. Taking the horse by the bridle, he said to him,—

“Be comforted, my poor Minna; thou shalt be the avenger of thy master.” He made signs to two of the knights, who, understanding at once the will of the count, took John of Oostcamp, bound his legs and hands, and tied him by the feet to the tail of Ulryck’s horse. The latter was then set loose in the country; and tearing headlong through brambles and thickets, he soon rent in pieces the murderer of his master, and returned in the evening to the town, bringing with him only some mutilated fragments.

The castle was demolished by order of the count, the debt of the widow was paid, and a requiem was sung at the church of St. Donatus for the deceased Ulryck.



The Intercession of the Princesses.

“ More flies are taken with honey than with vinegar.”

Narbonne Proverb.

PHILIP THE BOLD, who became count of Flanders by the death of Louis de Maelc, whose daughter he had married, made a promise to Margaret, his wife, that the year 1385 should not pass away until he had conducted her to Ghent. But this city had not yet made its submission, and the grievous defeat of Roosebeke, which had opened to the deceased count the gates of all the other Flemish cities, had not intimidated the citizens of Ghent. They rejected a peace that was sought to be forced upon them, and resolved to treat with the sovereign as an independent power. It was by no means certain that they would yield to violent measures: during the five or six years that they had been up in arms, they had shown themselves to be still more formidable from their courage than their numbers; and the population of Ghent at that time exceeded two hundred thousand.

It was wished that they should make an apology, and sue for forgiveness: some pretext for an amnesty was wanted; but it was difficult to decide how to set about this, on account of the well-known pride of the citizens of Ghent.

A worthy knight, Jean de Helly, who was as much beloved by the people of Ghent as by the nobility, and who was devoted alike to his country and his sovereign, was intrusted with the negotiation of this affair, which he conducted with considerable skill. He commenced by gaining the confidence of the butchers and the watermen, the two most influential classes in the city; and by their means he won over the greater number of the deans of the other trades. He represented to them the inconveniences of the prolonged state of warfare, by which

the chief city of Flanders was worn out ; he boasted to them of the upright intentions of Philip the Bold, and he spoke with such effect, that his words were soon repeated. Besides, the equity, generosity, and sincerity of Philip were well known, and his promises were deemed sacred. In espousing Margaret de Maële, it was not forgotten that he had restored to Flanders three cities, which the kings of France had retained in their possession for a long period ; namely, Lille, Douay, and Orchies. After a short time, the city of Ghent was disposed to receive Philip, only, however, on conditions suitable to its dignity.

As soon as Jean de Helly became aware of these inclinations, he informed the prince, who appointed a certain day at Tournay, to treat of the terms of peace. This manner of proceeding pleased the people of Ghent ; they sent deputies, whom they appointed to support their interests, and to consent to nothing that might bring dishonour on their city. The deputies set out fully impressed with the high import of their mission, and furnished with instructions, which, from their haughty character, were not much adapted to facilitate a settlement.

Following his wife's advice, who was a Fleming, and knew the character of the citizens of Ghent, Philip was desirous of receiving the deputies with some degree of state. He appeared seated on his throne as count, with his crown on his head, and on his right hand his wife Margaret : his aunt Jane, duchess of Brabant, the young and beautiful Countess Margaret of Nevers, his daughter-in-law, were also present, with Albert of Bavaria, prince of Hainault, William of Naumur, lord of Ecluse, Hugh d'Antoing, castellan of Ghent, Jean de Ghistelless, lord of Hornes ; and many other nobles and gentlemen. Philip had also assembled the ambassadors of the king of France, the ministers of the princes allied to him, and the deputies of Bruges, Ypres, Malines, Antwerp, and Lille, which were then the principal cities of Flanders, next to the good and turbulent city of Ghent.

The deputies from Ghent numbered two hundred and fifty, all of whom were the most distinguished and the most highly qualified persons in the city. They were re-

ceived with honour ; but it was hardly expected that they would have displayed so much pride. In spite of the remonstrances and hints of the lords who introduced them, they refused at first to bend the knee, according to custom, on appearing before the count. "We are not the subjects of Philip the Bold," they replied, calmly; "we are the deputies of an unconquered city : when we shall have heard the prince speak, we shall know if we ought to acknowledge him for our sovereign or not."

"But you have offended him," said Jean d'Axèle : "You are in open revolt against him," added the Viscount d'Ypres.

"Do you not come," added M. de Roulers, "to ask pardon?"

"Our fellow-citizens of Ghent," replied the chief of the deputies, "gave us no such charge or mission."

"We were asked here," remarked a senior member of the deputation, "in order to treat for peace."

"This meeting," continued a senior member, "was neither arranged by us, nor at our request."

All this, on the part of the speakers, was uttered in a tone of much solemnity and determination.

Count Philip was greatly irritated. Although he was good and generous, he was persuaded, like all the princes of that age, that it was the duty of subjects to supplicate on their bended knees, while the prince stood up, with his hat on. Albert of Bavaria noticed that the blood was mounting up to his face with indignation, and that the day appointed for restoring peace was in danger of being one of violent contention. Approaching the duchess of Brabant,—the good old Jane, he whispered a few words in her ear. The old princess immediately rose, and bending down before her nephew, she said :—"My lord, the great compassion that I feel for our poor people of Ghent has prevailed upon me to fulfil their duty ; do not be indignant against them ; on the contrary, receive them into your good graces ; and if you treat them in this manner, be assured that they will be the most faithful subjects in all your dominions." Observing what the duchess of Brabant had done, the beautiful countess of

Nevers (who, as the wife of Philip's eldest son, was one day to reign over Flanders), being desirous also of deserving the love of the people of Ghent, rose from her seat, drew near, and knelt beside Jane. Margaret de Maelle did the same, and addressed Philip as follows:—"My lord, and noble spouse, grant the prayers of these two virtuous princesses, and my own, according to what our good aunt asks from you: give up all anger, and even do more—confirm the rights and privileges of the good citizens of Ghent."

The brilliant assembly manifested increasing surprise to see the three princesses on their knees, and the deputies from Ghent still standing unaffected by what they saw.

"But," remarked the lord of Axèle to them, filled with rage, "do you not see what these three noble princesses are doing?"

"Look at the deputies," added M. de Schoorisse; "they do not manifest the least feeling!"

"The men of Ghent are made of iron," said De Ghis-telles.

While these reproachful words were being spoken, the deputies from Ghent stood immovable. They seemed to be waiting for Philip to speak, in order to regulate their conduct by what he might say. The prince's eyes were still glowing with anger, but his heart was touched by the conduct of his wife, his aunt, and his daughter-in-law. The French ambassadors united with the princesses in begging that the inhabitants of Ghent, whose conduct they could not but admire, might be well treated. Then Philip, raising up the three ladies, said that he could refuse them nothing. "I will even excuse," he said, "the uncivil conduct of these men in the presence of this noble assembly. I will treat them as a good and faithful prince, receiving them into favour, and pardoning them, forgetting all the past, forgiving their misdeeds, and looking on their faults as if they had never taken place. On my princely word and faith, I will confirm from this day forward, and for ever, their rights, privileges, liberties, and customs."

Philip would have said more, but at this part of his

discourse, the two hundred and fifty Ghent deputies all at once bent one knee on the ground. "My lord," said their leader, gravely, "we are in deed and in truth men; and—it is not inconsiderately that I say it—we now acknowledge you as our prince and lord. In the name of all our fellow-citizens, the inhabitants of Ghent, we swear henceforward to be the most faithful and the most loyal of your subjects; for if we offend tyrants, and offer resistance to violence, we love good masters, and are submissive to fair-dealing."

This burst of feeling excited a sensation. Philip could not help entertaining some sympathy with such resolute characters: his angry feelings disappeared, and a smile played on his features. "We are now treating somewhat on equal terms, and the treaty of peace that we are about to conclude will be all the firmer," he said.

That very instant the terms of agreement were entered upon; all the privileges of the people of Ghent were confirmed; all the rights, immunities, customs, and usages of their adherents were maintained, whenever it could be proved that they were founded on justice.

The prisoners on both sides were given up, and all banished persons were declared to be at liberty to return home, whether on the side of Philip or of the Ghent people. All past disputes and animosities were thrown into oblivion, and all who had suffered from having been cast into prison, or exiled, or who had been injured in any other way, were made to take an oath that they would never seek to retaliate. All inquiry into articles of furniture that had been pillaged was forbidden; all confiscated estates were restored; all law-proceedings in cases of extinct disturbances were annulled.

The treaty containing these conditions was signed by the whole assembly, and a copy of it sent to the city of Ghent.

The deputies afterwards took their departure, thanking their count, and begging him to come in person and receive at Ghent the tokens of the public gratitude, with the oaths of fidelity. Philip was quite surprised to see the Ghent citizens, formerly so taciturn and so disdainful,

become so unreserved and so devoted. Perhaps he hardly understood that it was because they had discovered their prince to be a man. He promised to pay Ghent a visit in a few days.

The treaty of peace produced a sensation of great joy in that city. The deputies were received with distinguished honours, and praises were lavished upon them. All the wild ideas of a past stormy period were obliterated; nothing was heard in the streets and squares but cries of "Long live Philip the Bold!" Flags were hung out from the houses; the public buildings were decorated; triumphal arches were erected; games were prepared; lists were formed for tournaments, and theatres erected for Philip's joyful reception. It soon took place, in the midst of the liveliest demonstrations of delight, the bells ringing their merriest peals. The whole body of trades surrounded the prince, with colours flying; music was heard everywhere, and shouts and huzzas from every mouth. It was a triumphal entry, and Philip and Margaret, in this ocean of love and joy, of songs and flowers, felt that there is indeed a pleasure in being generous.



The Dinner of the Merchants.

"Mankind are governed by dinners."—*C. Delavigne.*

At the period when Antwerp was on the high road to splendour, striving to attain the prosperous position of Bruges, Venice, and Genoa ; when, proud of her free river, her numerous ships, and her seafaring population, she showed how well she understood the advantages of foreign commerce and navigation ;—on a fine autumnal morning, in the year 1535, nothing was talked of throughout the city, but of a dinner that was to be given on that day by M. John Daens, a rich merchant of Antwerp, and a fortunate shipowner, who was equally distinguished for boldness and wisdom in his vast enterprises.

Two English merchants were struck with astonishment at the preparations which were making for this dinner.

"He must be a man made of money, this John Daens," they remarked to the landlord of the Crown, the inn where they were lodging.

"He is truly made of money, as you observe, gentlemen," replied the landlord ; "and our city can reckon some others, too, who are equally well off. Commerce has done it ; for John Daens has not always been rich. But the ocean, with all its risks, is not ungrateful to those who courageously trust in her : it is to the sea that the Medici in Italy, Jacques Cœur in France, and Berthold de Malines in our own country, are indebted for their princely fortunes."

The two Englishmen reflected on the position of their island, which at that time had scarcely begun to trade by sea, and they justly perceived that commerce contained the great element of lasting power.

"You need not, however, be so much surprised at this dinner," he continued ; "the guest—the Emperor Charles V.—unquestionably deserves some honour. Before

setting out for his African expedition, as he was in want of money, our countryman, John Daens, lent him two or three millions of florins, which the emperor was to repay on his return. The campaign was a glorious one: new markets have been opened up for our trading vessels, and the pirates of Tunis and Algiers will no longer molest us. But Charles has come back in difficulties; glory is not always a good paymaster, and the emperor has asked for time. Daens replied that he was happy to oblige his sovereign. The merchant had partners in the loan, and a sum of two millions of florins, compared with the extensive transactions in which they were engaged, was a mere *bagatelle*. He took advantage, however, of the opportunity to beg that the emperor would honour his house and the city by accepting an invitation to dinner."

"And what reply did Charles give to such an invitation? Did he not consider it rather indiscreet?"

"Not at all, gentlemen. Indiscreet!—thank God, Charles has not lost his good sense, although the Spaniards have been trying hard to deprive him of it. It was only a short time ago that he said, 'The courtiers rob me, literary men instruct me, merchants enrich me.'"

The two Englishmen, on hearing this, became again absorbed in thought.

In due time the emperor arrived, with a modest retinue, and without much state, at the house of John Daens. It seemed as if the two great social powers of the material world—the sovereign power, which is symbolic, and gold, which is real—were about to treat as equals; and this proved to be the truth.

Charles was received with a noble simplicity, and with an ease, respectful and yet unconstrained, by the merchant and his associates. When seated at table, everything went on as among fellow-countrymen and people in the same rank of life. The entertainment was magnificent; and the details that we have discovered respecting it appear sufficiently curious to be preserved in this account.

The lessons taught by history ought to be of universal use; and perhaps it may not be without interest to know

that some dishes, supposed to be of modern invention, were known so long ago as the sixteenth century.

There were two kinds of thick soup, one of rice, the other of hashed veal ; two vegetable soups ; two dishes of grilled meat, now called beefsteaks ; two dishes of small cabbage, in marrow and butter ; a large dish of chitterlings, puddings, sardines, and sausages, on a jelly of yolks of eggs, and refined mustard ; two Mechlin hams, stewed in wine, with tomata-sauce ; a dish of corned venison, with turnips ; two *fricandeaux, aux olives* ; two shoulders of mutton, *à la sauce à lail* ; two hot meat pies ; a dish of pork cutlets, *aux oignons* ; two sucking pigs, *avec une sauce au vin et au sucre* ; plates of fresh butter ; red radishes ; anchovies, red-herrings, pilchards, pickled salmon, cured tunnies from the Mediterranean ; spinach and sorrel. These dishes formed the first course, at which nothing was drunk but malt liquor and old Burgundy, on which John Daens set great store.

The second course consisted of two capons, *au riz* ; two chickens, *au blanc-manger* ; a roasted hare ; two dishes of partridges, pheasants, and snipes ; and an immense turkey,* stuffed with Spanish truffles ; two ducks, *à la doline, ou au verjus* ; two teal, with preserved cherries ; two poor-fowls, *aux poireaux* ; a shoulder of lamb and a breast of mutton, with caper sauce ; two geese *sur un coulis de chair à saucisses* ; a swan, stuffed with young onions, and stewed in Rhine wine ; a venison-pie, a lark-pie ; a pigs'-feet-pie ; oil, cream, and lard salads ; two dishes of prunes, four dishes of vegetables. The wine that was drunk was of Liège,† with Rhine wine and Champagne.

The third course consisted of fish, and was introduced by oysters, in their shells. Next came ray, sturgeon, turbot, stock-fish, a stewed turtle, thighs of frogs, with egg-sauce ; stewed oysters ; mussels, in milk ; stewed eggs,

* It was the Jesuit missionaries who first made the turkey common in Europe : it was to be found in this part of the world before their time, but very rarely.

† The vine was formerly cultivated in Hainault, Liège, and even in Brabant. It was Louis XV. who caused it to be destroyed, in his campaign of 1748. It has recently begun again to be grown in the territory of Liège.

with anchovy-sauce and wine ; many dishes of fresh and salt-water fish, the exact names of which cannot be discovered : afterwards came fritters, pancakes, tarts, ice-creams. The wines drunk were Spanish and Portuguese.

The dessert consisted of honeycomb-pastry, puffs, De Brie and Dutch cheese, fresh butter, artichokes, Corbeil peaches, &c. ; Parisian grapes, tarts of preserve of quinces, maccaroni, dried fruits *de niege de beurre au sucre* ; small cakes of rice and of oatmeal ; twenty different kinds of fruits ; almonds, pistachio-nuts, figs, and sugarplums. The wines drunk were from Greece and Italy.

When dinner and the conversation—which, however, has not been recorded,—were ended, a golden cup was brought to the emperor, filled with brandy mixed with sugar. John Daens rose up respectfully to set fire to the contents of the cup. The emperor, he knew, was fond of this beverage, although a temperate drinker. A servant stood near with a lighted taper : the merchant drew from his doublet a written paper,—it was Charles's acknowledgment of his debt. "Sire," said the merchant, holding up the document, "I am amply repaid for this sum by the honour which your majesty has conferred upon me ; and it is my wish to have no record of the debt, except the recollection of your kindness." So saying, he set fire to the piece of paper, and at the same time lighted with it the contents of the cup of gold.

"My good friend," said the emperor, "commerce is truly the sovereign here ; but there is still a fitting part left for me to play—that of its protector."

John Daens knew well what he had done, in his own name and that of his partners ; for the emperor immediately granted to the trade of Antwerp such privileges that, in ten years' time, the population of the city had increased to 200,000 souls ; mansions, resembling palaces, were built in every street ; and it was calculated that among the citizens there were five hundred, each of whom could, if he pleased, have lent to the emperor a million of florins.

An Advocate of the Old Times.

“Is it thought that charity impoverishes herself? No--she only *sows*.”

IN the city of Ghent there existed in old times an association of lawyers, called the “Confraternity of St. Ives.” It consisted of registered advocates of the town, all distinguished in their profession, and of unimpeachable character ; and the object of the association was to furnish the poor with gratuitous advice, as well as to carry on their causes in the courts of justice, whatever time, expense, or trouble they might involve. The necessary costs of these causes were defrayed out of the funds of the confraternity ; and many a poor person thus obtained relief, who, but for its assistance, might have pleaded in vain for justice and redress. Every year, too, on the festival of the patron of the confraternity, one of the advocates delivered an address, in which he enumerated the services rendered to the public throughout the past year, in order to induce the members to redouble their charity and zeal.

One day a woman presented herself in the sacristy of St. Michael, where the meetings were held, whose appearance did not betoken one who had been always accustomed to poverty. A member of the confraternity, a young man, whose name was Peter Mertens, came up to her, and asked what the case was on which she wanted advice. The unfortunate woman, who was much agitated, proceeded to relate to him the cause of her distress. She was a Fleming by birth, and had married a foreign merchant. Fearing to risk her dowry in her husband's business, she wished it to be invested in property in her own country ; and an estate had been bought for her near Ghent. Her fears proved but too well founded ; her husband became involved in difficulties, and had dis-

appeared a year ago, taking with him their only daughter, and she had heard nothing of them since. In the mean time the creditors had seized and sold off the property of the poor lady, who had then fallen into a state of the deepest misery, her only resource now being the Confraternity of St. Ives.

Mertens, on examining carefully all the circumstances, was convinced that the sale of the poor lady's property was illegal, seeing that she had in no way been mixed up with her husband's affairs. He felt assured, therefore, that he should be able to assist her; and seeing, moreover, a favourable opportunity for him to increase his reputation as a lawyer, he at once agreed to take up the cause. He consulted, moreover, several of his seniors at the bar, and they all confirmed him in the opinion that he could not fail to succeed.

The property in question amounted to forty thousand florins, a sum which would restore the ruined lady to ease and comfort; and so sure did Mertens feel of success, that he even supplied her with advances of money. With this assistance she was able to take a better lodging, and to dress more respectably; her health and spirits soon began to regain their former strength: one only sorrow remained,—the want of intelligence about those she loved best on earth,—her husband and her child.

The process against the creditors went on with vigour; but though it appeared easy and sure in the eyes of experienced advocates, it nevertheless required attention and labour. Mertens, who had ready talents, and spoke without effort, was, unhappily, too much given to ease and indulgence; and taking it for granted, in this instance, that the cause was secure, he gave himself but little trouble in preparing the evidence or arranging his speech; the consequence was, that while the creditors were skilfully defended, Mertens brought forward his arguments badly, produced only part of the documents, and managed the cause, on the whole, so inefficiently, that the poor lady was defeated, and her enemies gained the day.

This was a death-blow for poor Mertens: his eyes

were now opened to his folly, and he saw that he had ruined the cause of his poor client, as well as damaged his own reputation, by his culpable negligence. He had, however, a generous heart, and he did not hesitate a moment in taking measures to repair his fault. He ran to a notary, and made him register a deed, by which he obliged himself to pay an annual sum of two thousand florins for the benefit of his client. He took this deed, and said to the poor lady as he presented it, "It is through my folly that your cause has been lost : my fortune is not sufficient to enable me at once to make up for the evil I have done you ; but I will bring you every year the amount of the revenue of the property of which you have been deprived."

This was an immense sacrifice for Mertens : it was, in fact, all he possessed. He determined, however, to work henceforth with the utmost diligence : he renounced all his enjoyments and pleasure-parties ; study became his constant occupation ; and he soon reaped the fruits of his altered habits, for at the end of the year he had doubled his income ; and at the end of five years he was considered one of the richest and most distinguished advocates in the city.

One evening there arrived at the town of Ghent a handsome equipage, which stopped at one of the principal inns. A portly man, accompanied by his servant, and a young lady of about eighteen years of age, and of distinguished beauty, leaning on his arm, descended from the carriage. He engaged the principal apartments in the hotel, and gave out that he was from India.

Next morning he signified his wish to consult an advocate ; and as he asked for the most skilful in the town, the hotel-keeper sent for Mertens. The advocate, on first entering, was so much struck with the appearance of the young lady, that he remained for a few moments silent ; but soon recovering himself, he paid his respects to the gentleman, and asked in what he could be of use to him.

"I should wish," said the latter, "to purchase a particular estate in the neighbourhood of your town," mentioning at the same time the very property which had

been the cause of the process. "I must have this property," added he, "however much may be asked for it."

"It was sold for forty-thousand florins," said the advocate with a sigh.

"Buy't for fifty, sixty, or even a hundred if necessary," replied the stranger; "I must have it; and as I want it directly, I give you an unlimited commission as to the price. Remember," he added, "I shall expect your answer this evening."

The advocate returned in the evening with a message that the proprietor was ready to part with the property for sixty thousand florins. To this the stranger at once agreed, and the money was forthwith paid. He then told the advocate that he had recently returned from India, after an absence of many years from Europe, with a large fortune; that he had paid some heavy debts contracted before he left home, and that he was in search of his wife, from whom necessity had formerly obliged him to part. The lawyer soon saw that this was in fact the husband of the poor lady his client, and before many more words had passed, a complete explanation took place. The rest may be imagined: the lady, to her great joy, recovered at once her fortune, her husband, and her beloved daughter.

When informed of the generous conduct of Mertens, whom he had thus so singularly met with, the grateful merchant bestowed upon him the hand of his daughter, who united to all her charms the dowry of a million. The marriage was celebrated with great splendour, at the church of St. Michael, the whole Confraternity of St. Ives assisting at the ceremony.

We may add, that such a charitable confraternity as we have described, would by no means be amiss even in our own day.



The Painter-Smith of Antwerp.

I.

ABOUT the year 1480, there stood in the vicinity of the Gasthaus, in Antwerp, a few low-built dwellings, which belonged to the convent of the Zieken, and were let to persons in humble life. They were inhabited either by workmen, who paid with difficulty from their scanty wages the weekly rent, or by old people who could barely manage to support an existence upon the earnings of their earlier years.

In one of the least ruinous of these little abodes there lived at this period a widow, with her eldest son. Although she had nothing in the world to call her own, yet happiness and contentment had always dwelt under her roof; she bore her poverty with the greatest patience, and would not lightly have exchanged her lowly condition for a better. The steady industry of her son, and that tender attachment which he manifested towards her, constituted her whole happiness. An affectionate mother, with all the feelings of her loving heart centring in her son, to see herself thus beloved by him appeared to her the highest bliss. In her every prayer and sigh the name of her child was murmured, and the love which she felt for him had gradually become a kind of self-forgetfulness. The son clung to his mother with like tenderness, and toiled night and day that she might want for nothing. Whenever he fancied that he had guessed at some wish of hers, he would not rest until he had earned, by the sweat of his brow, enough money to satisfy that wish. Through his zealous perseverance he had made considerable progress in his trade, and no one surpassed him in the various objects of art and skill forged by the hammer, on which account the payments he received were unusually high. The widow's abode, was tastily furnished in

consequence, and she was reckoned amongst the most "comfortable" of the tenants. Her son, who took no ordinary pleasure in his work, was always singing and merry of heart, which had indeed made his real name to be forgotten, and people only called him "the merry smith."^e

After the lapse of a few months, however, mirth and content vanished from the house of the old widow; the joyous ballads had long given place to tears and sighs, and the neighbours now only recalled the songs of the "merry smith" as reminiscences of happier days.

One Monday, the widow, with tearful eyes, was sitting by the bed on which her son lay stretched. The sturdy youth, who for many a year past had wielded the sledge-hammer with such power and dexterity, who had expended for his mother's sake such abundant drops of toil, was now dwindled to a haggard skeleton. Upon his bare neck one could clearly distinguish the muscles and the veins, over which the skin was drawn like some transparent covering; his whole frame seemed, as it were, shrunk together. His face bore less visible traces of bodily suffering. A deep veil of mourning, as it were, lay heavily upon his features, and in those dulled eyes, which were riveted upon his mother, a thousand heart-rending emotions were legible. From time to time, however, there flitted over his pale thin face an expression of bliss: it was not a smile, but a something incomprehensible, which restored to his eyes their brightness, and seemed as if it would fain snatch him from the grave; and when the sorrow-stricken mother saw how vehemently the soul of her son was agitated with hope, and love, and deathly anguish, she pressed his wasted hand despairingly in hers, while one only word escaped her trembling lips, the name of her son,—“Quentin! O Quentin!”

After some time thus spent in silent thought, the tears of the unhappy widow began to flow afresh, and she broke forth with stifled accents:—

“Quentin, my poor son, dost thou not long for anything; dost thou not thirst?”

“Oh no, mother! but how is it with thee? I do not

see thee eat anything ; the livelong day thou art weeping beside me, and injuring thy health. Oh, how unfortunate am I ! I shall die,—that I feel,—not through my bodily sufferings, which will, indeed, cost me dear, but because of something else ;—oh, my God !—something that for a long time has pressed me down to the grave, which takes away from me all rest both night and day, and causes me to wish for death. Alas, mother, mother !”

The widow got up from her seat, and while with a powerful effort she subdued her own grief, she folded the sick man in her arms with tender emotion, and kissed away the tears which streamed abundantly down his face.

“ Quentin !” she sighed. “ Oh, tell me what weighs down thy heart ; confide it to thy mother ; perchance I may be able to heal the secret wound ; and then, Quentin, then I shall not, perhaps, lose thee. Oh, if this were but possible !”

Quentin answered not ; he gazed fixedly upon his mother, while incessant tears rolled down his cheeks.

“ Confide in me,” continued his mother ; “ tell me what secret anguish thou dost hide in thy heart ; speak, for God’s sake !”

A burthened sigh broke from Quentin’s breast ; he covered his face with both hands, and with a voice which revealed emotion so powerful that one might fear his life would ebb away in the utterance, he exclaimed :—

“ Thou art pining with hunger, mother ! For three days thou hast eaten nothing, and dost thou think I do not know of this ? Oh, I shall most surely die, since my eyes behold thee thus dwindling away like a very shadow. And is it for me thou art suffering ? for thy child alone ?”

“ Is it nothing else ?” returned the mother, in accents of confidence and joyful pride. “ Calm then thy troubled heart. To endure hunger for thy sake, Quentin—for thee !—God is my witness, that the sole consolation that remains to me on earth is in suffering somewhat for my own boy.”

“ And I have arms which should be able to provide for

you," cried Quentin, mournfully. "I pine for work almost as I do after eternal happiness, and yet must fain see my mother perishing with hunger! O heavens! were I not to wither away at the very thought, I should be unworthy of all mercy!"

These outpourings had exhausted his strength, and his head, which had been raised in his excitement, sank back powerless upon the pillow. He continued, more calmly:—

"Does there remain nothing more of any value, mother? Nothing wherewith to purchase one loaf?"

"Nothing, my son," returned the old dame, dejectedly; "I have sold everything."

Thereupon the wretched man wrung his hands in wilder despair, as if beside himself, and exclaimed:—

"So thou wilt perish of hunger, and I, even on the brink of my grave, must see thee sink down exhausted by my bedside? Oh, no! By my soul, that I cannot bear! I will get up and show thee what a son's love for his mother can do. Give me my clothes, and if thou dost not eat before two hours have gone, may Heaven itself punish me! Ah, mother! mother! our good Lord will not be wroth with me for these words of mine. I feel my strength; again I live!"

It seemed, indeed, as if Quentin was able to stand up, supported by his own strength; he lifted his arms like one who was ready for the heaviest labour, and his movements were so agile and full of energy, that his mother could not comprehend what had happened to her son; she dared not yield herself up to the hope of a miracle, but gazed upon him with mingled doubt and astonishment.

Quentin had, meanwhile, dressed himself with unusual rapidity; but, however earnestly he strove to overcome his weakness, it was not difficult to perceive that his condition was in no way improved; for his movements, little by little, grew more feeble and slow, his breathing became shorter, he threw himself on his mother's neck, then sank down powerless upon a bench, and cried, in accents of despair:—

"Alas, beloved mother! I would so willingly work for thee, but I am not able!"

At the same moment the door of the little house was opened, and a sister from the convent of the Zieken entered with a basket on her arm.

"Mother Matsys," she cried, "I have brought something for our sick Quentin.—But what on earth has happened to you, good folks? has some misfortune befallen you, that you both sit there and weep?"

Neither mother nor son answered; they had not as yet asked any one for assistance, for they were ashamed to make any one acquainted with their necessity. Where is the industrious workman who submits to beg for a piece of bread without some sense of pain?

The nun did not allow herself to be deceived by this silence; she placed the basket on the table, and took out from it a flask, then poured some choice red wine into a glass, and handed it to Quentin, with these encouraging words:—

"Quentin, that will strengthen you, and give you new life! Come, drink it off!"

"If my mother drinks," returned Quentin, "I will promise to pray daily for sister Ursula!"

"Just you drink yourself," continued the nun; "I will pour out another glass for your mother."

"Ah! then I will pray for you twice a day!" exclaimed the good smith, with tears of joy in his eyes.

When, at length, at sister Ursula's entreaties they had both partaken of the wine, the nun held up the basket to Quentin, saying:—

"Oh, I have still more; just look!"

Scarcely had Quentin glanced into the basket, when, with arms raised heavenward, he exclaimed:—

"Good sister Ursula, you know not how much good you bring. I may venture to tell you,—you who appear to us an angel of consolation and compassion. Sister, sister, my mother has not eaten anything for three days, and she is perishing with hunger."

"O God! is it possible!" cried the nun; "take this,

then, at once, pray ; hereⁿ is a loaf of fine bread and a good piece of meat."

The surprise of the widow was so great, that she could not even taste the bread ; but she no longer required it so urgently, as the wine had already given her new strength. While the nun was urging them to partake of the food, Quentin had seized one of sister Ursula's hands, without her remarking it. After a few moments, however, she drew it away abruptly, for she had felt a glowing breath thereon.

"Why, Quentin," she cried, "what are you doing?"

"Oh, forgive me, sister," sighed Quentin, "and be not angry because I have moistened your hand with tears of gratitude, which Heaven has surely approved of."

The nun blushed, for Quentin's features and his looks fixed immovably upon her exercised some invincible power over her ; one might have thought that he was praying to her as to a saint. Sister Ursula quickly tried to give the conversation another turn, and thus extricate herself from a position which was becoming painful to her ; addressing the widow, therefore, she said :—

"Ay, dame Matsys, there are many sick folks at present ; there are three laid up in your neighbourhood : Veven, the weaver ; Bulem, the carpenter ; and Hans, the upholsterer. I bring the two former some little restorative as often as I can ; but Hans works for our convent in his bed."

"What does Hans do, sister?" interrupted Quentin, hastily.

"He paints little engravings for us," returned Ursula ; "and although he leaves much to be desired, we are not so exacting with him, in consideration of his illness. See, here are some that I have just fetched from his house."

With these words she handed a few little pictures to Quentin, which he glanced at, one after the other.

"Sister," said he, at length, "it seems to me that I could even do better than this."

"Ah ! you are jesting, Quentin ! Hans has to work day by day at his carpets, and therefore he understands

the matter somewhat ; but you, who are simply a smith, —that could scarcely be !”

Quentin started quickly from his seat, and addressing the nun proudly, exclaimed : “ Sister Ursula, there is neither a smith, nor a worker in tapestry, nor a painter, who can produce such a fountain as that by Quentin Matsys in the Glove-market ! I have not worked in colours, it is true, and perhaps may spoil a few engravings at first ; but do not forget, sister, that a son who labours for his mother is no ordinary workman. Perhaps my good angel may favour me ; an inward voice tells me so.”

“ Well, then, Quentin, here are a few uncoloured prints ; try your powers. Your mother may accompany me to the convent of the Zieken, and I will give her colours and brushes for you.”

“ Go, mother ; hasten, pray !” cried out Quentin in ecstasy. “ Thanks be to God that I can still work ! Oh for certain, I shall get well if these pictures succeed, and thou shalt no longer suffer from hunger on my account. Go quickly !”

As soon as his mother withdrew with the nun, he examined one print after another, and already determined beforehand on what parts he would paint the various colours. His thoughts were so earnestly occupied in these matters, that the blood mounted to his head, and his emaciated cheeks were once more covered with a bright glow. He drew his finger backward and forward over the engravings, as though he had already begun to paint. Poor and rudely executed were the prints he had before him : this Quentin well perceived, for, during his apprenticeship he had devoted much of his time to drawing, which is shown clearly enough by all the artistic works which he produced in iron.

When his mother returned with the colours, he betook himself to his bed, where, in a half-sitting posture, he began to paint upon a square board which he had arranged before him ; and the old widow was so curious as to the result of the undertaking, that she followed every motion of the brush with anxious intensity of mind. Although Quentin worked very slowly, he had, before

the lapse of an hour, finished off a little picture with the most beautiful colours, and in the choicest tints.

Quite enthusiastic at seeing his own work, he exclaimed : —“ Only look, mother ! It has succeeded beyond my expectations ; I shall soon get well now.”

The old dame knew nothing of the art on which she was called to pronounce ; but she was pleased in her heart at the brilliant colours, and stood wrapt in wonder before the picture.

“ Quentin,” she cried, “ should I take this as a specimen to the Zieken ? ”

“ Ay, mother, when I have painted a few more. Give me back that one, so that I may place it before me.”

“ Dost thou mean, then, to paint them all alike ? ”

“ No, mother ; but there are so many faults in the first which I can avoid in the others.”

The old dame was as joyful and gratified as if some great good-fortune had come into her possession ; not precisely because her Quentin had painted the picture so bravely, for she had not the slightest opinion upon the subject, and fancied, besides, that only a few stivers could be expected for such work ; but she rejoiced at her son's calm frame of mind, whose condition, from the earnestness he manifested for his new occupation, visibly improved ; nay, before the last touches were put to the third picture, the opening words of his old half-forgotten songs again broke forth. At intervals, too, the happy mother interrupted him in his work with a hearty embrace ; then he would say, laughing :—

“ Do let me work away, mother, so that I may get on faster ! ”

After he had finished the fourth, the widow urged Quentin so earnestly, that he at length permitted her to take them all to the Zieken, and dame Matsys ran as hard as she could to the convent, which was situated at a little distance from the town. She knocked hastily at the door, and waited with beating heart till it was opened.

A very old nun appeared at the little grating ; and when she saw it was only one of the usual townsfolk, she opened it slowly, while she asked :—

"What may the good dame want?"

"Is sister Ursula in the convent?"

"No; sister Ursula has gone out; come again to-morrow."

With these words she closed the door, and made a gesture as though she would say, "Now, do go, so that I may lock the door."

Dame Matsys was much dejected at sister Ursula's absence, and remained standing, as it were, fast bound before the convent-gate.

"Have you any other business?" inquired the nun.

"Ay, sister," said the old dame, while she drew forth the pictures from under her cloak; "be so good as to give these little pictures to sister Ursula, and tell her that the smith, Quentin Matsys, painted them."

The nun looked at the proffered objects with an expression of mistrust; they could not have impressed her favourably, for her features conveyed this fact very clearly.

"Good heavens! what horrid pictures these are," she exclaimed, "one is disgusted at the very sight of them; on no account would I have them in my prayer-book!"

"Are they not good, sister?" asked the anxious mother.

"Oh, it is a shame to paint such pictures!" was the discouraging reply of the nun, as she quitted the window.

With a breaking heart the mother returned to her dwelling. Should she convey to Quentin the disheartening intelligence, and see him sink down again into that mortal despair? But could she restrain her tears, had she sufficient command over her features not to allow them to betray the anguish which oppressed her?

The poor woman felt, meanwhile, unusual chagrin at the stern words of the nun, whose import she had wrongly interpreted. The prints which Quentin had coloured represented sick men; some of them covered with ulcers; and the young smith had thrown so much expression into these woe-begone faces, and presented them in such natural colours, that the nun was horror-struck.

The mother did not comprehend this, but fancied that

the nun was passing judgment on the whole style and manner of the colouring. Scarcely had she put her foot over the threshold of her house, when Quentin called out :—

“ Well ! how do they find my pictures, mother dear ? ”

The distressed mother fell weeping into the arms of her son, and through her overpowering sorrow could not utter a word ; she simply stroked, in the greatest agitation, Quentin’s head, which lay nestling on her bosom. The more unbearable the lot of these unfortunate beings seemed to become, the more closely did love seem to bind them together. If hollow sighs had not revealed their anguish, one might well have thought that they were seized with joy, for they mutually exhibited the warmest tokens of tenderness. A profound sense of affliction, felt in common, taught them to find in that their only consolation. At length Quentin said :—

“ Mother, dearest mother, what are we to do now ? Deceived by every hope, abandoned by all. O God ! ”

“ My child ! ” cried the mother, despairingly, and losing all power over herself, “ my dear child, I have fed thee on this breast, have worked for thee with all my might when thou wert a little one. Thou hast, like a good son, richly repaid my love, and hast maintained thy old mother by the sweat of thy brow. Well, Quentin, if it is even so, that we must die, if wasting strength is dragging thee down to the grave, and hunger is driving me thither, there still remains to us a blessed consolation, a joyful assurance,—we shall go to heaven together ! ”

A long embrace followed these words, and the rapid breathings of these two beings, overpowered with affliction, were only interrupted at intervals by a voice softly whispering, “ Mother ! mother ! ”

They had already remained for a certain time quite still, with arms twined round each other’s neck, while their hot tears were falling, and they would have sat there yet longer, had not a voice outside their door suddenly startled them.

“ Where does the smith Quentin Matsys live ? ”

The old dame quickly dried the tears from her face, and was hastening to open the door, when it was pushed open, and four persons entered the room.

The first two were the abbess of the convent of the Zieken and an ecclesiastical personage who had accompanied her; behind these came sister Ursula with another nun, who was carrying a large book under her arm. All these persons looked in astonishment at Quentin, who had laid aside his brushes, and seemed to be timidly awaiting a severe sentence.

The abbess, approaching him, showed him his first pictures, and, with a benevolent expression of countenance and voice, inquired: "Is it you who painted these pictures?"

"Yes, lady abbess," returned Quentin, with troubled heart; "but I hope, if I have not forfeited your favour, to arrive at greater perfection in course of time. Forgive me, noble lady, for having spoiled these; forgive me for my poor mother's sake!"

"Spoiled!" exclaimed the abbess, in wonderment; "you are too modest, for I am come for the purpose of telling you that more beautiful pictures have never been seen than those you have painted."

These words fell like a thunderbolt on the astounded Quentin; a death-like paleness overspread his countenance, and his limbs shook as if some sudden convulsion had seized him. In joyful excitement he tenderly pressed his mother's hands, and exclaimed:—

"Ah, mother! dearest mother!"

The happy woman understood him; she threw herself with wild impetuosity into his arms, and pressed him to her breast.

The four bystanders were so affected by this scene that their eyes filled with tears.

"Quentin Matsys," said the abbess, "will you do something for me?"

While the abbess spoke, the mother had withdrawn herself from the fast embrace of her son; she held his hand, however, in hers, and remained standing near him.

Quentin answered joyfully, "Speak, honourable lady,

The abbess took the book from the hands of the nun, and showing it to the young man, asked him whether he would paint for her the History of the Passion of our Lord which was there represented. Quentin replied that he should not dare to take upon himself such a task, for fear of spoiling the valuable missal, did not the words of praise which the abbess and the ecclesiastic had bestowed upon him give him courage to undertake the task.

As soon as he had given the abbess the promise, she prepared to go away with her companions. Sister Ursula coming forward, whispered to Quentin :—

“Now go on, Quentin ; the abbess is greatly pleased with your work, she cannot cease talking of it.”

And, in a softer voice, she added :—

“Your mother will not now want for anything ; only take heart !”

These last words filled Quentin with inexpressible happiness ; he turned a grateful look on sister Ursula, and said :—

“For you, for you I will pray evermore, and my mother also.”

When the abbess had retired, the happy woman, turning towards her son, threw down two gold florins on the book he had to paint, saying :—

“See, Quentin, what the abbess gave me for your work. Now we are rich, my child ; rich beyond measure ! I will go forthwith and purchase all you have wanted in your illness, and you will be cured, my dear Quentin ; for now our suffering is at an end, and we shall again be happy.”

“Did I not tell you that a son who labours for his mother is no ordinary workman ? Believe me, the anguish I had to endure at the sight of our privations has made a painter of me. God himself guided my hand !”

Quentin painted away for a considerable time at the book the abbess had brought. By the time he had finished the work, a wonderful improvement was already perceptible, and he received a liberal remuneration. He was afterwards intrusted with other works of a similar kind, which he executed to the satisfaction of all. He at

length tired of painting simple engravings ; he began to make his own designs, and this becoming gradually more and more easy to him, he surmounted, ere long, every obstacle, and soon became a proficient in his art.

Ten months longer he remained sick and weakly, so that he could not leave the house, and this interval he employed in treasuring up in his memory all the hints and ideas which a powerful natural genius, combined with an accurate study of nature, suggested. When he went out for the first time, people already saluted him everywhere as a renowned artist.

He no longer wanted for money ; he removed with his mother to a handsome dwelling, and attended to her wants with the same affection as heretofore. She had the gratification of hearing her son called the ornament and glory of his native country, and yielded up her life, with blessed tranquillity, in his arms.

[In a series of traditional stories of the Low Countries, it would have been unpardonable to have passed over the celebrated "Quentin Matsys," though his story is better known than some others which we have related. The foregoing is from the pen of M. Conscience, and the following is the more romantic version, given by De Plancy and others.]

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The Painter-Smith of Antwerp.

II.

IN the city of Antwerp, in the year of grace 1482, there might be seen, near the cometary of Notre Dame, now the Glove-market, at a blacksmith's forge, a young man about twenty-two years of age, who, with his father, carried on the trade of blacksmith and farrier. The appearance of this young man was graceful and animated; his nobleness of mind as well as his strength of body was well known throughout Antwerp, and his bright, kindling eye indicated the presence of a vigorous mind. Nevertheless, he was as yet but a simple workman, whose only superiority above others of his craft lay in his good conduct and his greater skill.

At the time our story commences, a distinguished stranger came to live in the same street, in a house nearly opposite to that of the blacksmith. This was Peter de Vos, a painter full of feeling and talent, though but little known in the present day, in consequence of most of his works having perished at sea, along with many others, which were being brought to the Netherlands by the Emperor Charles the Fifth. Having been munificently rewarded by the liberality of Mary of Burgundy, he had purchased this elegant house, and was now come to take possession of it with his family, which consisted of his two sons, who were painters, and his only daughter, Caroline, a young maiden of distinguished virtue and beauty.

Whilst De Vos and his sons devoted themselves to the easel, Caroline, accustomed to the graceful labours of the needle, employed her leisure hours in embroidery, an art in which, like many of the ladies of her time, she greatly excelled. She might often be seen seated at the window, occupied with her feminine labours; at other times stand-

ing at the open casement watering some favourite flowers, which she tended with affectionate care. Her appearance soon attracted the attention of our young blacksmith, whose name was Quentin Matsys. From the time he observed her, he became more and more pensive ; he no longer held his hammer with a steady hand ; he discontinued, all at once, the songs by which he used to divert himself at his labour ; and in the evening, instead of joining his friends at their usual games, he would remain in front of the workshop, grave and thoughtful, with his eyes fixed on the painter's house, starting and blushing whenever he saw his fair daughter, or whenever the movement of a light pointed out to him her shadow.

For a year the love which had sprung up in Quentin's heart burnt in secret. In vain his father, surprised at the change which had taken place in his habits, endeavoured to guess the cause ; in vain the young man's friends tried every means to bring him back to his usual amusements ; no one could discover his secret thoughts, excepting only the object of them. The mute assiduities of Quentin had not escaped the notice of Caroline de Vos ; she had read it in his expressive eyes ; she thought, too, that she discovered a superior mind under that rough but noble-looking exterior ; she loved him without avowing it to herself, or perhaps even knowing it.

As young Matsys was considered the first workman in the city of Antwerp for talent and skill, many important works had been intrusted to him and his father, and they had thus become tolerably wealthy. Somewhat confident, then, in the respectability of his position, and bold as a man is who is bent upon an honourable enterprise, Quentin ventured to think that he might, without presumption, become a suitor for the hand of Caroline. As he was revolving these thoughts in his mind, Peter de Vos, who knew in what estimation the skill of his opposite neighbour was held, came to him one day, and gave him an order to make an iron knocker for his door. Quentin was delighted at the opportunity, and of course bestowed the utmost pains upon the work. He made a grotesque figure, which he hammered and fashioned to such perfec-

tion, that the old painter evinced the greatest admiration for it.

"You have," said he, "a genius which may some day make you an artist."

Quentin hearing these words, and supposing De Vos to be in a good humour, resolved to profit by so favourable an opportunity.

"I am only a workman," said he; "but nevertheless, thanks to my father, I am in prosperous circumstances; and if you please," added he, in a tone of emotion, "you can make me happy."

De Vos looked at the young man and smiled.

"I understand you," said he; "you would like to see my paintings;" and with this he took him by the hand, brought him to his house, and introduced him into his picture-gallery. Quentin, who was much agitated, did not venture to undeceive the old painter as to the interpretation which he had put upon his words. Besides, he had been fortunate enough, on first entering the gallery, to find himself face to face with the fair Caroline. Both blushed deeply; but Quentin, who wished to have spoken, became confused and embarrassed, and could not utter a single word. However, he consoled himself by saying:—

"How she blushed! my affection is, then, returned."

The artist now began to point out his pictures to him. The art of painting, which had received a new impulse from the works of the brothers Van Eyck, of Hemmeling, &c., was making great progress, and Peter de Vos had contributed much to its advancement. Quentin fancied himself in a kind of atmosphere of delights as one picture after another, in this extensive gallery, attracted his admiration. But that which most riveted his attention, and drew from him an exclamation of joy, was a portrait of Caroline herself, painted by her father. He turned round instinctively to compare it with the original; but in the mean time Caroline had disappeared.

"What!" said the painter, surprised at his emotion, "you do not consider that my best work?"

"Ah!" cried Quentin, falling on his knees, and taking the painter's hand, which he pressed to his lips, you can

make me the happiest of men ; I would give all that I possess for that picture."

"For my daughter's portrait?" cried Peter. "Should I sell the portrait of my child? What folly is this, young man?"

"Alas!" said Quentin, making an effort to speak, "I love your daughter; and nothing will satisfy me but that you give her to me for my wife."

The artist started back in amazement; then, after a moment's silence, he replied:—

"So, my young friend, you are in love with my daughter. I am truly sorry for you; but I have long since determined that Caroline shall never marry any one but a painter like myself."

"Have pity on me," cried the young man; "do not refuse me at once; leave me, at least, some hope."

"Come, come," replied the old painter, "this is foolish; let us say no more on the subject;" and with these words old De Vos led back the blacksmith from the gallery, and politely showing him to the door, bade him good morning. •

Matsys, as if he had awaked from a frightful dream, could scarcely recover his senses. Raising his eyes to the house, and perceiving Caroline at a window, he saluted her with a lowly and supplicating gesture, which seemed to say, "Do not forget me;" whilst she, on her part, returned the salutation by a look of sorrowful disappointment.

Quentin did not return home, but wandered about all the rest of the day, trying to collect his thoughts, and to form his future plans. In the evening he shut himself up alone in his little room, wrote a long and respectful letter to Caroline, in which he avowed his honourable attachment, promised never to love any one but her, and to love her till death; and then he unfolded his plans, and asked her, if she did not at once reject him, to keep her heart for him, and to wait for him three years.

Next morning he found means to convey this letter to Caroline through her maid and confidante Brigitta, and after two days of anxious suspense, the heart of Quentin

was rejoiced by the appearance of a little packet, which was mysteriously put into his hands by a maid servant, whom he recognised as the attendant of Caroline. He could not doubt that it came from the desired quarter, and as he opened it his countenance became animated and cheerful. It contained a beautiful rosary, and these few words: "In three years: remember me in your prayers: I also will pray for you."

This was the height of all Quentin's desires, and he lost no time in carrying out his project. With this view he immediately sought his father, and declared to him that he felt that the time was come for him to see the world, and to visit the workshops of foreign artists, in order to perfect himself in his profession. Notwithstanding the grief of so painful a separation, the old smith, knowing that it was the custom for young workmen thus to leave home for a time, in order to return with a greater amount of skill and knowledge, readily gave up his objections. He furnished his son with a supply of money, as well as recommendations to the most skillful artificers in the various cities he was about to visit, and embracing and blessing him, he sent him forth on his journey.

A year had passed away since Quentin left Antwerp. Caroline still resided with her father, and endeavoured, as much as possible, to withdraw herself from the eyes and the attentions of the young men of the city. She still, it is true, daily arranged her father's work-room; but she no longer stepped towards the window, or looked into the blacksmith's shop; or if she did, she stood with her eyes full of tears; for he to whom she was so tenderly attached was no longer there. Even the flowers lacked her accustomed care. As for Quentin, in the beginning of his adventures—indeed during the first year—all went on well with him. He visited the cities of the Netherlands,—Brussels, Ghent, Bruges, &c., where, at that period, the

most famous masters of painting lived and taught. Although it happened that, like many of his contemporaries, he was not skilled in the art of writing, he yet found occasional opportunities of sending kind messages or little presents to his father ; sometimes a burgher, a travelling artisan, or a merchant, whose affairs led him to Antwerp, would be the bearer of these tokens of remembrance. Neither were words, full of meaning, forgotten for Brigitta, which she, on her part did not fail to convey to her mistress. Among them was a small but beautiful picture, with the initials Q. M. minutely painted in the corner. In this way it became known that Quentin had availed himself to the utmost of his opportunities, that he had made incredible progress in his art, and that he was highly valued by his masters, not only on account of his talent, but likewise for his excellent conduct.

The period of separation wore on. Quentin went to Cologne, crossed the Rhine, and visited the towns, abbeys, and castles on its beautiful shores, in order to see all that was worthy of note ; to copy, and to speak with, the great masters of Germany, and thus to become more completely conversant with his art. Intelligence now came seldomer, and neither his father nor his mistress knew for certain whether he were even alive. Of this, however, Caroline was certain, that if he still lived he still loved ; and since the fame of his works was spread abroad, and had even reached the work-room of De Vos, who was highly pleased at the news, without dreaming of the interest which his daughter took in the success of this new artist, hope was kept alive in the bosom of Caroline, and the possibility of arriving at happy days seemed more and more probable.

But still hers was a harassing position, and she had much to suffer for her faithfulness. Though she had lived as much as possible in retirement, still suitors came forward to claim the hand of the fair and wealthy daughter of the celebrated artist ; and when she refused, and found fault with each, either reasonably or unreasonably, and appeared as if resolved to live and die unmarried, old De Vos became incensed ; and the patience with which

he had till then endured the humours, the caprice, and self-will, as he called them, of his daughter, entirely forsook him. Years and sickness helped to make him yet more irritable. He believed himself obliged to abandon the comfortable idea of seeing, in his old age, his loved child united to a worthy husband; and his former love and kindness gave place to a sullen humour, which made the days of the young girl pass sorrowfully enough.

Caroline endured all this in silent patience, and held firm her belief in the faith of her beloved, till towards the conclusion of the third year, when, now that so many months had elapsed since any intelligence had arrived from Quentin, and she thought that he might be dead, or, according to the manner of men, have changed his mind during his long absence, grief, by degrees, began to penetrate her soul, and, like a hidden worm, consume the beauty of her youth.

The fourth year of Quentin's absence had commenced, and several months of it had passed away, when one day, upon Master de Vos's return from church, the servant in whose care the house had been left told him that a stranger had been asking for him, and had waited for a short time in his study; but finding the master did not return, had left, promising to come and see him at another time.

• Visits like these were so common, that De Vos thought no more about it, and without replying, he went into his gallery. Upon the easel was standing a half-finished picture of the Annunciation, and the artist, in passing, could not help standing for a moment to look at his work. In doing so, he happened to cast his eye upon the hand of the Madonna, and he immediately observed a ring upon the finger which he had not painted; he stepped back in astonishment at the extraordinary skill with which the ring had been studded with sparkling gems, and knew not which most to be surprised at, the bold attempt of

the unknown painter upon a picture done by another, or the art with which gold and jewels were here represented, and which furnished such a striking proof of his skill.

He now called the servant into the room, and examined her closely ; there had been no one there, she said, but herself and the stranger of whom she had spoken before, and whom she described as well as she could. De Vos could not reconcile the description with the appearance of any of his acquaintances in Antwerp ; the servant likewise said that she had never seen the person before. De Vos then supposed he must be some foreign master, and delighted himself with the thought of becoming acquainted with one who, to judge by this little specimen of his talent, could be no common artist.

He immediately hastened to his daughter, and related to her the occurrence. He described the appearance of the visitor as he had been told it by the servant, and invited her into his study to see the wonderful ring itself. A ray of light had fallen upon the soul of Caroline during her father's description, giving rise to a vague alternate feeling of joy and grief, of hope and fear. She also thought she saw upon the ring, in nearly invisible minuteness, a Q and M, interwoven just as she had seen them in the little picture which she had received two years before. She now thought she knew all ; the unknown master, his faith, his affection, and the delicate manner in which he had acted. All she could do was to wait in anxious but pleasing suspense until the stranger should reappear.

At this time a public exhibition of pictures was opened at Antwerp, in the summer of 1486, and the magistrates had promised rich prizes to those painters who should most distinguish themselves.

A few days before the exhibition, one beautiful and pleasant evening in July, old Matsys was sitting in his house occupied with thoughts of his absent son, when a loud knocking was heard at the door. With a sort of presentiment he ran to open it, what was his delight when he saw before him his son Quentin, returned from his three years' absence, in all the bloom of manly health

and gracefulness ! He joyfully embraced him, and heard with paternal pride and satisfaction, the history of his travels, and the progress he had made in his adopted profession.

At the exhibition, three works of an unknown artist were particularly remarked, having for their motto a little hammer. The first was an old woman playing with a dog,—a work of rare perfection ; the second a picture of St. Eloi, the patron of smiths, which the artist had offered to the church of Notre Dame in Antwerp ; the third was the portrait of Caroline de Vos, admirable for its likeness and life.

Peter de Vos was astonished, and soon perceived that these three pieces were by the same hand. He even suspected that under them was hidden some gallantry of one of those who had aspired to the hand of his daughter ; but it was in vain that he attempted to guess the name of the artist ;—none of the young painters whom he knew at all approached him in excellence.

The day of the solemn bestowal of the rewards given by the city revealed the mystery. The first prize was given, amid general acclamations, to the unknown artist. The seal which hid his name was broken. It was QUENTIN MATSYS !

Peter de Vos ran to him, and warmly embraced him ; and at the end of a month he became the husband of the lovely Caroline, who had so long and so faithfully kept her heart for him.

In 1508, Quentin Matsys painted the famous "Descent from the Cross," which is still an object of admiration in the museum of Antwerp. He painted many other pictures, most of which perished, either in the tempest which swallowed up so many works of art, or in the lamentable devastations which accompanied the religious troubles of the sixteenth century.

Quentin Matsys lived to the age of seventy-nine years ; but long before that period he had lost his beloved Caroline. From that time he threw aside his pencils, which he had only taken up on her account ; and, to combine with the memory of his wife the remembrance of the condition

in which she had first seen and loved him, he resumed the blacksmith's hammer.

His last performance was a chandelier of beaten iron, which he offered to the church of Arschot, as a thank-offering for the honourable sepulture which had been given to his beloved wife in that church.

Matsys died in 1529, and was buried in the convent of the Capuchins at Antwerp; but his remains were afterwards removed to the foot of the tower of the cathedral, where, on the left of the great entrance, a tomb, with his bust in relief, was erected to his memory.



lord chamberlain ; afterwards he rose to be prime minister, and held the reins of state entirely in his hands. Ambition, however, is never an innocent passion. Compliant and docile in the presence of his sovereign, Labrosse assumed an insolent air with the nobles, who, on their part, submitted with an ill grace to the dominion of so low-born an upstart.

Three years thus passed away. Time, the great healer of human sorrows, closed up Philip's wounds, and as he was still but a young man, he was advised on all sides to marry again. The nobility hoped that a young queen would at least balance Labrosse's influence ; and they were constantly suggesting this and the other person as a suitable match for him. Philip was long undecided. One day, however, as he sat pensively gazing on the portrait of his sister Margaret, duchess of Brabant, he recollected all at once the brave Duke John, his friend, and his sister Mary of Brabant, whom he had seen at Compiègne : he remembered the affection which his father, Louis IX., entertained for that young girl, and how he took pleasure in perceiving in her the marks of a pure and noble mind. She had struck Philip as well ; but as he was then engaged in marriage to another, his admiration was confined within the limits of duty and virtue. He was not long now in making up his mind, and he despatched an ambassador privately to Brabant. Mary, whose sister-in-law was constantly depicting Philip in the most exalted colours to her, had also a favourable recollection of him ; and, in short, the matter was speedily arranged. The marriage of the king of France with Mary of Brabant was therefore celebrated with splendour at the castle of Vincennes, in August of the year 1274. The first two predictions of the nun of Nivelles were thus fulfilled.

Philip was henceforward less governed by his favourite, Labrosse. Mary of Brabant was a pious and gentle princess, witty without causticity, and sprightly without malice ; she loved and encouraged the arts, and was fond of cultivating flowers. The gardens of Vincennes were adorned by her care with oleanders, orange-trees, tulips, and a number of plants unknown till then in Paris. At

the castle she divided her amusements between music, painting, and poetry. She had brought with her the faithful Adenez, who composed at that time the poem of Bertha, and who confesses, in one of his epilogues, that the poem is less his than that of his good mistress, Mary of Brabant, and of Blanche, a young lady, of whom history is silent, except under this name, but whom a conformity of tastes had rendered the inseparable companion of the queen of France.

Philip became daily fonder of his young queen, loving everything that could please her—her flowers, her pictures, her minstrel Adenez. He granted everything that she asked, and Mary used her influence to repair the evils caused by Labrosse. She might indeed easily have displaced him from his high post, if she had wished to resort to intrigues ; but she confined herself to her duties as wife and mother, for she had now borne a son to the king. Philip henceforward seemed to divide his affection between his wife, Louis d'Evreux, her first child, and Louis of France, his first wife's eldest son. This young prince, now nearly ten years of age, the heir to the crown, afforded the highest hopes, no less from his talents than from the excellence of his disposition. He had, however, one fault in the eyes of the king (arising no doubt from an undefinable instinct), that of having an unconquerable aversion to Labrosse. Another source of vexation to the king arose from his observing that his prime minister seemed to show a sort of dislike for the queen. Labrosse's suspicious mind was in fact constantly conjecturing that the queen would one day be his ruin, because he knew he deserved it. Reports were current also, not to be wondered at then, as to the habits of the queen, who occasionally employed herself in the physical and occult sciences, and therefore was ranked by minds of a certain class as little better than a witch. It was even whispered that she had fascinated the heart of her husband by the powers of her sorcery, and that the foreign flowers cultivated by her at Vincennes assisted her in her enchantments.

Philip laughed at these accusations ; but his favourite's

mistrust of the queen, and his son's aversion to Labrosse had, it must be confessed, an unpleasant effect upon his mind. In other respects, however, Philip was a happy man, until a frightful event befel him, which all at once plunged him into the deepest anguish. One morning in the spring of the year 1277, scarcely an hour after he had left his eldest son, who had grown up a charming and lively young prince, he was suddenly informed that he was dead. Beside himself with alarm, the king ran to the dead body, unable to believe in so dreadful a blow. It was too true; he found his son dead, his features entirely distorted, and with evident traces of the effects of poison: cries of horror were soon mingled with tears of despair.

Injurious reports began to be secretly circulated respecting the queen, but without being at first brought to the ears of Philip. The young prince had breakfasted that morning with Mary of Brabant: the remains of a poisonous liquor were found in the cup from which he had drunk; the oleander and other unknown plants had produced, it was said, the magical poison.

At last, before the assembled peers, Peter Labrosse formally accused Queen Mary of having poisoned the king's eldest son, with the intention, no doubt, of eventually procuring the death of the three other children, in order to place her own children on the throne. The suspicions of magic which already attached to the queen soon increased. Philip, who was overwhelmed with grief, said not a word in opposition to Labrosse's proposal to placing a guard over Mary of Brabant, and the preliminary proceedings of this great trial were commenced by the French peers.

The circumstances we have mentioned seemed convincing proofs. There were, besides, so few persons interested in committing this crime, that the judges were by degrees brought to believe that the queen was actually guilty of it. Philip, in great perplexity, not daring to repel the horrible imputation, went to see the queen in her prison. The mere sight of her there dispelled all his prejudices. She related to him the three predictions of the nun, and pointed out to him that the third predic-

tion—the time of great danger—had now arrived. The unfortunate king quitted the prisoner, persuaded of her innocence ; but by the representations of Labrosse and others, he came at last to believe her guilty also, and imposing silence on the dictates of his heart, he permitted the judges to proceed. However, when he learned that the queen was condemned, as a murderess and a witch, to be burned at the stake, he would not permit this sentence of death to be carried into execution, until he had consulted the far-famed Beguine of Nivelles, who, it was said, along with the knowledge of future events, possessed also the gift of discovering the most hidden secrets. He sent to her an embassy, consisting of learned prelates and abbots ; but the holy woman's only reply was,—“ The judges have delivered an unjust verdict ; nevertheless, the individual who committed the crime is near and dear to the king.”

These somewhat vague expressions threw Philip into a fresh state of doubt. Some historians affirm that he went himself, *incognito*, to consult the prophetess. But according to most of the chroniclers of the time, he was satisfied with sending a second message, begging her to come to Vincennes. She dismissed the messengers, and promised to set out in a few days.

Knowing that the life of a princess of her country was in danger, the nun commenced her journey without delay. She proceeded on foot, until, not far from Cambray, she saw a young monk pass by, with two active steeds : the monk was habited in white ; he had for companion a squire, and a fine greyhound followed him. Recognising the Beguine by her dress, the monk stopped, and inquired whither she was going. “ To the court of Vincennes,” she replied. “ Good sister,” replied the white monk, “ we are also going in that direction ; confide yourself to our care. Your feet will not conduct you to Vincennes so quickly as the palfrey of our good squire Gaspard.” Without saying a word, the nun drew near the squire, got up behind him on the palfrey, and all three galloped off towards the capital.

The king waited for the appearance of the Beguine with great impatience : she arrived at length, having,

left her guides at the gates of the city, and immediately asked to speak with the queen in her cell. On leaving the prison, she declared that Mary of Brabant was innocent, but that the guilty person could not yet be discovered. The people had been expecting some miraculous interposition, and were highly disappointed at this simple reply. The king now believing, with sorrow, in the sorcery and witchcraft of his wife, allowed justice to take its course; but recommended to the nobles not to carry the sentence into execution until they had consulted the ordeal.

In front of the castle of Vincennes, and in the middle of the avenue which leads to Paris, a huge funeral pile was erected. The judges being seated on a platform, the queen was brought forward, dressed in black, and a herald cried aloud, "This is Mary of Brabant, accused of poisoning and witchcraft; if there be any knight present who is desirous to defend her, and to engage in combat with her accuser, the lists are open, and may God defend the right!"

An unbroken silence was the only reply to this summons, which was repeated thrice, from hour to hour. Two priests attended to offer the consolations of religion to the unhappy queen, abandoned by her husband, and even by her brother John, to whom she had written; but who had sent no reply. The multitude of bystanders were plunged in the deepest gloom; even the executioner grieved in prospect of his cruel task, until, at the third time of the herald's summons, before the queen was taken away from her friend Blanche's arms, to be carried to the stake—the Beguine of Nivelles—who kept her eyes steadfastly fixed on the Vincennes road (which led to the abbey—now the hospital—of St. Anthony), perceived afar off a movement, which she appeared to be waiting for, and turning to the platform, she exclaimed aloud, "The white monk! Peers of France! behold now the judgment of God—the ordeal!"

For a moment there was a complete pause. At first, bounding along as fleet as an arrow, the nimble greyhound came up; then the squire of Cambray arrived at full gallop, and immediately threw down an iron

